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INTO THE JAWS OF DEATH

OR THE
BOYS OF LIBERTY
AT THE
BATTLE OF LONG ISLAND

BY JOHN
DE MORGAN

"GIVE ME LIBERTY OR GIVE ME DEATH"

Feb ⁴
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Master. Graham Cranston
To Gerald

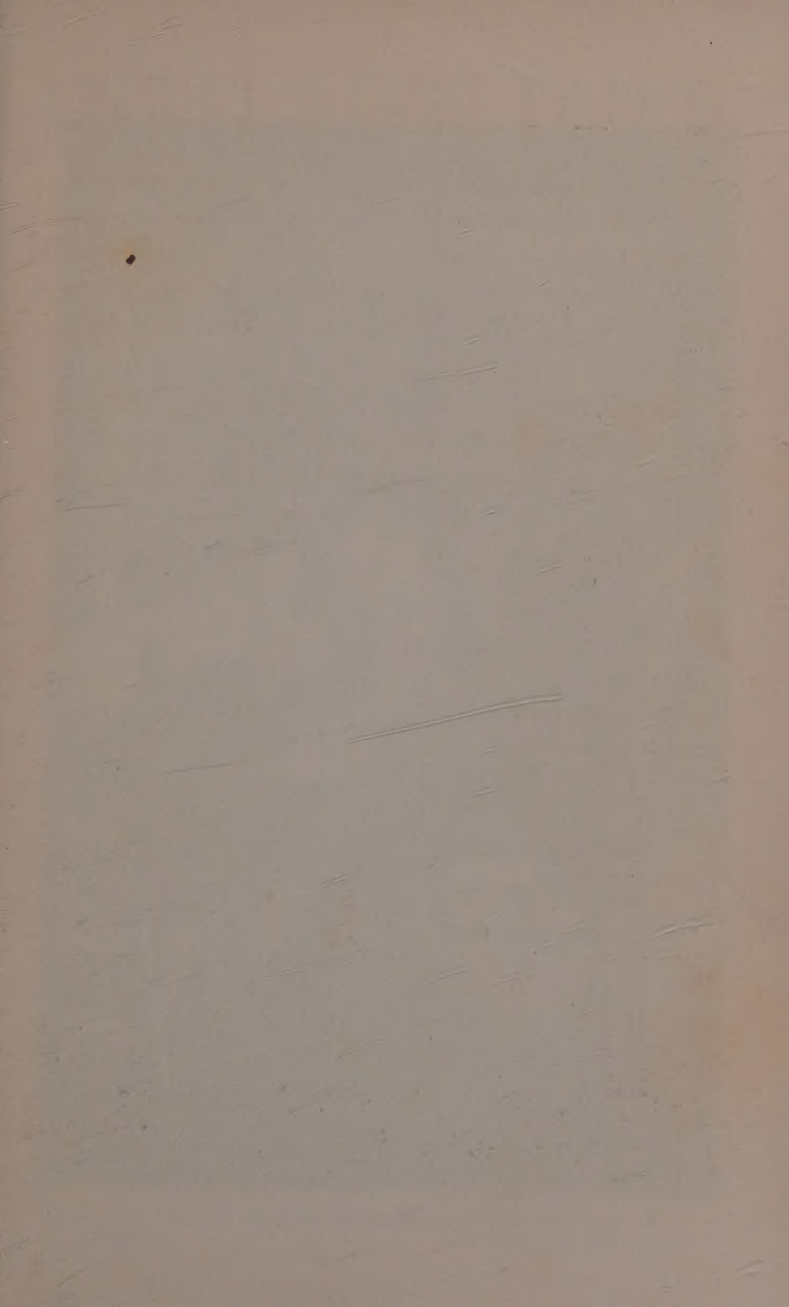
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"You have the plan of campaign drawn up by General Howe and some maps. Quick! Give them to me."

(See page 92)

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BATTLE OF LONG ISLAND

BY

JOHN DE MORGAN

AUTHOR OF

"On to Quebec," "The Young Ambassador," "Paul Revere,"
"The Young Guardsman," "The First
Shot for Liberty," etc.



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By STREET & SMITH

Into the Jaws of Death

INTO THE JAWS OF DEATH.

CHAPTER I.

ALWAYS IN THE WAY.

"Have you sawn all that wood, you lazy varlet?"

"No, I haven't, and, what's more, I shall not do so to-day," I answered, impetuously.

"Why not, you young varlet?"

"There's too much of it for one day; my back aches and my hands are sore."

"Sore, are they? Well, dang me, if I don't make every bone in your body sore afore I've done with you."

"You touch me if you dare," I cried, at the same time raising a big ax which lay at my feet.

"So you'd murder me, eh?"

"Look here, Abram Van Tyne, you have tried to kill me lots of times, and what for?"

"'Cause you are a lazy, good-for-nothing varlet, and

that's the truth. Don't you owe everything you have to me? Haven't I fed you, and educated you, and clothed you all these years, and what do I get for it all? Nothing but complaining, morning, noon and night. I tell you, Amos, you are a good-for-nothing, lazy varlet, and I'll have it out of your bones even if I have to suffer for it afterward, so get on with that wood and don't come in to supper till every stick is sawed."

"I have heard what you have said, Abram Van Tyne, and I'll say what I've got to and you shall hear me, or I'll kill you like a dog."

I was angry; I had for the first time felt that I was not a child, and, as a man, I would not be a slave. I was rising seventeen, a sturdy, strong country boy, and I had been thinking all that day, and knew that I was just a slave and nothing better; in fact, I thought that those negroes on the Virginia plantations, about whom I had heard, were better off than I was. All these thoughts had made me desperate.

"What have you got to say, Amos?"

"You tell me that I owe everything to you. That's a lie, and you know it. My mother gave you a sum of

money on her deathbed and said—I have heard and you know it is true—that it was enough to keep me until I was old enough to work, but she gave money to the Friends' school to pay for my education; you tried to get it, but they would not give it up, and they went before the justice and got an order compelling you to send me to school."

"Who filled your head with all those lies?"

"They're not lies, and you know they are not!" I shouted, and Van Tyne came near me as though he would strike, but I raised the ax and would have killed him on the spot; I was so angry and desperate.

"So, Abram Van Tyne, I do not owe you for board or clothing or education, seeing that my own mother paid in advance for all of these things, but you do owe me something, for I have done a man's work for you and got no thanks even for it."

"Have you done, you—you—varlet?"

Without waiting for an answer, he turned on his heel and went into the house. I took up the saw and tried to force it through a log of white cedar, but my arms were so tired that I could not get its teeth

to bite, so I threw down the saw and then myself on the cool earth, and for a moment forgot that I was a man and cried like a regular baby.

I never knew my father, and had only a very faint recollection of my mother, for I was only five years old when she died. I do not know how it was I came to be left in Van Tyne's care, but I was, and had to make the best of it. I was not a good-looking child, nor did I improve in looks as I grew up, a fact which everyone told me, for no one thought I had any feeling. Why, I do not know.

There was long-legged Peter Simpkins, who said I was as ugly as sin, right to my face, and the very next day I heard him say to Betsy Tanglewood that she was the most beautiful girl in Elizabethtown, though she is as plain as a pikestaff, and that's not saying much for her beauty. Peter held his 'kerchief to his mouth to prevent being sick as he uttered the words, but he knew it would please her, and he did not want to hurt her feelings. I haven't got any, I suppose.

When I was too young to work I was always in

the way; no kind words were ever spoken to me, though I longed for them.

I know I was always making mistakes, but how was a child of ten to know better? When Aunt Van Tyne was cooking the dinner one day she called to me to put some pepper in the soup which was boiling over the fire. She said she had got just enough for the soup, and I should find it on the kitchen mantelpiece in a paper. I found a little package and emptied it into the soup, but it was her half ounce of snuff which got into the soup and not the pinch of pepper, which was in another paper at the other end of the mantelpiece. I got such a dressing down for that, and had to go without food for three whole days, that I think it ought to have been sufficient, but even now if I offend Abram Van Tyne's wife, whom I was taught to call aunt, she turns upon me and tells me that I tried to poison them all.

I remember another mistake I made in the cooking department, which occurred a year after the snuff episode. Aunt Van Tyne was going to make some bread, and she had emptied the flour barrel, but it was

not enough for her baking, so she called me and bade me get a bag of white flour which was in the kitchen locker, and empty it into the big bread bowl ready for her to mix and knead. I did as I was told, but here again I made a mistake, for I took the only bag there was in the locker, and, instead of flour, it was plaster of Paris, out of which she tried to make bread. Abram Van Tyne had taken the bag of flour to give to the dominie of the Dutch church, and had not told his wife.

When she mixed the stuff with water she thought something was wrong with the flour, but when she set it aside to rise, it turned into a hard mass like stone.

Didn't I get a drubbing for that?

All this I thought of as I sat by the wood pile pondering my hard lot; all that and more, for it seemed as though my whole life passed before me.

I wondered what I had come into the world for; I was of no use to anyone, except as a slave.

"Get out of the way, Amos," I heard morning, noon and night. And when I got out of the way I was called a lazy varlet for trying to escape working.

I worked hard at school and learned all I could, but my school days ended when I was twelve, and from that time until the moment of my life when I introduce myself, I had worked from four o'clock in the morning until it was too dark to see at night, and got nothing but kicks and harsh words for it.

I was tired of it all, and mentally vowed that I would assert myself and only work as men worked, and get paid for my labor as well.

"Amos, what are you doing down there?" the farmer called out as he saw me sitting by the wood pile.

"Resting and thinking," I replied.

"Resting, eh? Do that when you get to bed, and as for thinking I can do all that is necessary for this homestead. Get up and go on sawing."

"I can't; my arms ache."

"Can't, eh? Well, I know a medicine that'll make you."

Before I could reach for anything with which I could defend myself, the ax being, perhaps fortunately,

on the other side of the wood pile, the farmer gave me a kick which fairly lifted me off the ground.

I picked up a stone and flung it with all my might at the cruel taskmaster. It struck him on the head, and he fell like a dead log, the blood streaming from a gash over his eyes.

I had often wished him dead, but now all the terror of it flashed through my mind, and I felt that I had murdered him. It was horrible! I crossed the path and stooped over him, and found that he was breathing. I got a pitcher of water and poured it over his face; I wiped the blood away, and, presently, he opened his eyes and looked at me.

"I am very sorry, uncle," I commenced, and it was true.

"Are you? I'm glad of it," he said; "it'll be a kind of consolation when I see you hanged."

"Hanged!"

"Yes, Amos, you've come to the end of your tether sooner than I expected. You've been a good-for-nothing varmint, but now it's all over, and you'll hang by the neck until you're dead."

I remembered that a few months before so many of the Tories had threatened to kill the men who sympathized with the Colonial cause that a law had been passed by the Provincial Assembly that whoever threatened, or attempted to kill another, should be hanged without any mercy. That law had never been put in force, but Abram Van Tyne had been appointed one of the Vigilants to see that it was respected, and the first one to be condemned under it was to be one of his own household.

I know now, what I did not then, that there was a large sum of money belonging to me which was to go to him in case I died before I was twenty. That explained his conduct; it was plain that he had tried to wear me out and kill me by hard work, which would not be considered murder. He had failed in that, but I had given him an opportunity which served him better.

He rose to his feet and staggered into the house, from which he emerged in a few minutes, with a gun under his arm, and I felt that he was going to denounce me and secure my condemnation.

If I could only reach Col. Herd first I might get him to listen to my story, and, perhaps, he would believe me.

With this intent I started to the camp of the Continental troops, about two miles from Elizabethtown, as fast as my weary legs could move, but I only got half-way when I fell down from exhaustion, and, do what I would, I could not get up again.

I managed to crawl off the road and into the long brush which had grown up by the roadside, feeling that I should be hidden from view, and get a much-desired rest.

CHAPTER II.

I OVERHEAR SOME NEWS.

I must have fallen asleep, for I do not remember anything until I realized that it was quite dark and that my legs were full of pins and needles, as we say, and I had to force myself to think how I came to be there instead of at home.

When I remembered how it was that I had crawled into the brush I knew that I should be too late to tell my story to the Colonial officer who was in command of the district, for Uncle Van Tyne must have reached the camp long before.

I was very drowsy, and I still felt unable to walk far, so I thought I might as well sleep a little more and then in the morning I should be better able to make my plans, for I had resolved that I would not go back to the farm.

I had just begun to lose consciousness when the sound of voices roused me. My first thought was

that I was being searched for, and I wondered whether my hiding place had been discovered.

I very soon knew that no thought of me occupied the attention of the two men, who, it was easy to perceive, were officers of the Continental Army.

It seemed wiser to still remain in my hiding place and listen to the conversation.

I was always full of curiosity, and all through my childhood was getting into all sorts of trouble through it. When I was only six years old I heard a visiting clergyman say that truth was at the bottom of the well, and as I had been cautioned always to tell the truth, I thought I would find out what it was like. I climbed to the top of the well cover and unloosened the pail; I caught hold of it and was quickly splashing in the water. I thought truth was not worth looking for, and I screamed with fright. Fortunately Bob, the hired man, heard my cry and called out to me to hold fast to the rope, and he would pull me up. I had a good wetting, and got a drubbing as well, for I had spoiled my clothes, so Aunt Van Tyne said. On another occasion I cut open a feather bed to see what

kind of feathers were in the ticking, and when I heard uncle say that it was as easy to find a needle in a haystack as to find me, I scattered a lot of newly stacked hay to see if I could find the needle. Of course, the very first time I heard a drum I lay in wait to find it unwatched when I cut a big hole in its parchment head to find out where the noise came from.

So I had won the character of being curious, and was living up to it. That may be why I thought it was not wrong to listen to what the officers were saying.

"I hear that Gen. Howe has landed on Staten Island," I heard one say, "with all the men he brought away from Boston."

"Is that true?"

"I do not know but it is so reported, and, moreover, they say that an immense fleet has passed through the Narrows and anchored off the island."

"In that case we may expect some fighting soon."

"The sooner the better, but we ought to have more definite information."

"Why not send some men over to spy out the land?"

"It is useless."

"Useless?"

"Yes, they would never reach the other side of the river alive, and the only result would be that we should be so many men less, and we are short handed as it is."

"I think you could easily get volunteers to take the risk."

"That would be easy, but I will not ask anyone to do it."

"You are too soft-hearted for a soldier."

"Perhaps so, but on the field I will kill all I can and shall shed no tears."

"I tell you that any man who could get the information you seek would be a hero, and I shouldn't wonder if Congress gave him a medal."

I heard all this, and the thought occurred to me that I could do all they wanted, and then I should, perhaps, win a pardon for the threat I had made and so save my life. The idea made me move, and the quick ears of the officers detected a sound which was suspicious.

"What's that?"

"A water rat."

"No, it wasn't, it was a human rat, not a water rat."

I felt that they were thrusting the points of their swords into the brush and my life was not very safe, so I called out :

"It's all right, it's only me."

An exclamation fell from one of them which sounded very like an oath, but I did not mind that, though I had often heard Uncle Van Tyne say that the devil knew his sons by the oaths they used.

I waited my opportunity and crawled a little distance farther away before I made myself visible.

In another minute one of the officers had me by the ear and was dragging me by it to the road. I thought my ear would remain in his hand but separate from my body, but I did not cry out, that was another of my peculiarities; the thought of pain would make me a very baby, but when I was really suffering I was as silent as though I had no feeling.

When at last I was on the road, the dim light en-

abled me to see that the officers were of high rank, and I was less frightened.

"What did you hear?" one asked.

"All you said," I answered boldly.

"You young rascal, what were you doing skulking in those bushes?"

"Trying to sleep, and if your honors had not come when you did I should have been asleep."

"Very likely," one of the officers muttered, but loud enough for me to hear.

"Why didn't you sleep at home?"

"I've got no home."

"Where is your father?"

"Dead."

"Your mother?"

"Dead."

"But where do you live?"

"Just here, now; I've got no home, I've run away."

"You have, eh? What for?"

"He was cruel to me and made me work——"

"Lazy?"

"I'm not lazy," I almost shouted, "I worked from

four in the morning until it was too dark to work longer, and I never got a thank you for it."

"What are you going to do if we let you go?"

"Have a good, long sleep, and then go and see Col. Herd and ask him to let me join his regiment."

"Do you know Col. Herd?"

"No."

"Ever see him?"

"No."

"That's a lie, for you are talking to him now."

I was so confused that I did not know what to say, or what to do. I was foolish and began to blubber like a baby, which made my captors laugh, and that caused me to stop just as suddenly as I had started.

"Pretty soldier you would make! When a bullet whizzed past you I suppose you would scream or blubber."

"Try me."

"Tell me why you were going to seek Col. Herd?"

"I have heard that he is a kind man, but, perhaps, he has heard of me."

"Heard of you, boy?"

"Yes, has not Farmer Van Tyne told you about me?"

"Not a word; I don't know the farmer from Adam——"

"He is not a bit like Adam Granger," I interjected, and again they laughed.

"Why should this farmer tell me about you?"

I thought it was the best to make a clean breast of it, so I told my story, and then added:

"May I join your regiment?"

"No, you are too big a fool; you would be in the way."

What was there about me to cause everyone to treat me in the same way? It was always: "Amos, you are in the way," and I was getting tired of it.

"I think you are honest, so I will let you go, but my advice is to go home; you'll never be any good, so you might as well be there as anywhere else; but, look here, boy, if you ever tell one thing you have heard to-night, you will not live twenty-four hours after, do you understand?"

"Yes."

"Then walk your chalk."

"I haven't any," I answered, not understanding the slang expression.

"Cut your mahogany, then."

I did not know what he meant, but I thought I might as well leave company, which had not been pleasant, for my ears were tingling, and I pressed my hands over them fearing that they were torn from my head.

I heard the officers laughing as I ran away, but I did not mind; I only felt the more determined on the plan I had worked out in my mind during those few minutes.

"You won't laugh at me the next time you see me," I exclaimed, and the next minute was sprawling in the dirt with a great bruise on my head.

"Laugh! Why I am laughing now, and I guess it will be a long time before you laugh again."

The voice was that of Farmer Van Tyne, and it was a blow from the heavy stick he carried that felled me to the ground.

"Get up, you lazy varlet, or I'll knock the life out of you."

"Do so. I hate you, and I would rather die than be your slave."

"You would, eh? Well, you shan't die just yet; you've got some wood to saw first."

"I'll never saw any more for you, you Tory!"

The stick came down again on my back, and I was not surprised, for Van Tyne hated to be thought a Tory worse than poison, and it angered him.

I did not care for the pain then; I knew just how to make him writhe in agony of mind.

"Yes, Tory you are, and Col. Herd knows it. Do you think he did not see you send that box across Decker's ferry the other night, and who received it? Was it Decker or Benjamin Seaman?"

"I sent no box."

"Didn't you? Perhaps it was some apples in a barrel for the king's men over on Staten Island."

"You young imp of sin, what do you mean?"

"Ask Col. Herd."

The stick fell again on my head, and I was knocked senseless, at least, I suppose so, for when I opened

my eyes I was in the loft over Van Tyne's barn, lying on a lot of hay.

I was quick enough of wit to know that I was a prisoner, and that my plan to make friends of Col. Herd was frustrated.

I put my hand to my head and found that it was bandaged up very roughly, evidently by the farmer, but it was proof enough that I had been badly injured, or he would not have taken that trouble.

The only opening to the loft was by means of a step-ladder from the floor beneath, and the trapdoor over the opening was closed and securely fastened on the other side. I knew there was no escape that way.

For a long time I tried to think of a way to get out of the loft, but the only one which seemed to promise success was to wait until some one came up to the loft and then to make a dash for liberty, even if I had to kill the one who opened the trapdoor. I was desperate; I knew what life would be under Van Tyne's roof, and death would be preferable, so the risk I ran would be no greater than if I stayed calmly and awaited my fate.

But the day passed and no one came. I could see through the joints of the weather boards that it was getting night, and then I felt sure I was to be starved into submission.

Farmer Van Tyne did not know the boy he had to deal with, though he thought he did.

When I was sure that all had gone to bed I began my work of prying off some of the roof shingles. I had never imagined they would be on so firmly, but the barn was well built. It took me an hour to get two of them off, but that was the hardest part, for after that the work was easier.

I could read the time by the location of the stars—most boys brought up on a farm, as I had been, could—and I knew that it was about an hour before sunrise when I had got off enough shingles to enable me to crawl through.

I climbed to the ridge of the roof and looked round. The fresh, early summer air felt refreshing after the musty smell of the loft, and I took in several good, long breaths of it.

I waited until my nerves were steady, and then I

crawled down the side of the roof and planted my feet on a little projection, which had been left by the builders to enable them to get a foothold whenever they had to repair the roof. I knew that my only chance was to drop, and I shuddered at the thought, for the roof was high up from the ground, but when I looked over I saw a load of hay standing a little distance from the barn, and I thought that the farmer had purposely left it there to prevent having any conversation with me if he had attempted to put any in the loft. I stood up; I never thought I could balance myself on that slanting roof, but it is wonderful what one can do when necessity commands. I gauged the distance and then gave a leap. I did not land on the top of the hay, but I was near enough to break the fall, and the hay slipped off the wagon as I tried to grasp it, and so I reached the ground.

I was very hungry and also very desperate, so I stole round to the kitchen window and forced it open. I crawled in, and, before I left, I had eaten a good-sized pie and had taken another to eat on my journey.

I succeeded in reaching the yard again without hav-

ing been discovered, and I began to make tracks towards the Achter Kill as fast as I could.

I soon found that I was far from strong, and so I sat down and rested. Then the pie was a large one and difficult to carry, so I reasoned it all out that I could carry it better inside than out, so I got my teeth in it, and it was not long before the last piece had been swallowed.

To show you how foolish I was, I actually thought that if I ate the pie I should be able to go for a much longer time without food, but I had not taken into consideration that the stomach can only digest a certain portion, and I had not eaten that pie long before I thought my inside was filled with lead, and I wished the Continentals had the lead to make into bullets, for the fancy got possession of me that the pie had really turned into the metal. I tried to walk but could not; I was doubled up with pain, and then another thought came into my mind, uncle knew how fond I was of pie, and, perhaps that one had been made especially for me and it contained poison.

Perhaps it was that thought had triumphed over

matter or it may have been that nature was angry at the overloading of my stomach, for scarcely had I thought of the poison than I began to vomit, and the effect was pleasing, for I was soon relieved and able to resume my journey.

I was going to cross the Achter Kill and penetrate to the interior of Staten Island, and if I could manage to find out all about the British I would return to Elizabethtown and give my information to Col. Herd. That was the mission I had set out to perform, and I almost shouted in my enthusiasm at the thought that no one would say, after that had been accomplished, that Amos was in the way.

CHAPTER III.

ON STATEN ISLAND.

It did not take me long to reach the water, and I stood on the bank of the Kill looking in every direction to find out if it was possible to get a boat. I dare not try Decker's ferry, for I knew him well, and he would be sure to tell Van Tyne, and I might be captured and taken back to the captivity and slavery from which I was escaping.

I walked along the bank up to my knees in water, for the salt meadows were well covered with water at that time, and was about despairing when I saw an Indian canoe right ahead of me, but, unfortunately, there was an Indian in it. He was skirting the shore and I felt sure he was going to land and, if he did, I should seize his canoe.

It was vexatious to watch him proceed up the river so far, but in a short time I was rewarded, for he pulled into the bank, made fast his canoe, and stepped out.

I waited until he had got some distance from the

bank and then I crawled down to the boat, unloosened it, and paddled noiselessly down the Kill. I had learned how to make the canoe glide through the water without the slightest noise being made, a trick in which the Indians were proficient, and I made use of my knowledge with good effect.

When I was nearly opposite Decker's wharf I crossed the water and was within gunshot distance of Staten Island, when a bullet splashed into the water so close to my boat that it startled me.

I nearly lost my paddle in my fright, but my nerves grew stronger with the danger, and I paddled up the river a little distance until a bullet struck my paddle and broke it off short.

I looked towards the land and saw a company of soldiers, the queerest-looking creatures I had ever beheld, with guns in their hands and all pointing at me.

I suddenly thought of a foxy Indian trick and waited for the next shot to be fired. When the bullet passed close to my head I flung up my hands, jumped and fell overboard into the water.

As I sank beneath the surface I heard a loud laugh

mingled with a number of guttural sounds and exclamations, which proved to me that my trick had been successful and that I was supposed to be dead.

I had often been called a water rat, and I was at that moment glad of it, for it had been bestowed upon me because I was as much at home in the water as on the land. I kept below the surface as long as I could and then allowed my body to rise and float, only to sink again in a few minutes.

While I was floating I kept my eyes fixed on the Staten Island shore and saw that the soldiers had evidently got tired of watching me and had gone inland.

I swam up the river some little way and then made for the shore as quickly as I could, reaching it unnoticed. I landed and looked out for a place where I could dry my clothes. The sun was by this time rising in the heavens with a refreshing heat which caused my clothes to steam.

I was close to Minne Berger's farm, which he had deserted some weeks or so before, when he heard that the soldiers were coming, and that everything would be destroyed.

I made my way to the barn, thinking that safer than the house, and I found it untenanted. I mounted the ladder to the loft, and pulled it after me, so that I should have an advantage if anyone had followed.

When I stripped off my clothes I felt sleepy and tired, so while they were getting dry I had a good sleep, which, perhaps, was fortunate, for on waking I heard a man's voice, and, as no one answered, I felt sure he was talking to himself.

"Well, I'll be danged, I know I left that ladder right there, an' now it isn't there. Where can it be?"

I crawled closer to the opening in the floor and looked down, and saw Minne Berger himself standing below all alone.

"I guess some unnateral critter has been an' stole my ladder. Mebbe it was those tarnation Hessians King George has bought an' sent over to kill us. I saw a lot of 'em prowlin' about, an' I heard 'em firin' at a canoe out in the Kill, but what could they want with my ladder, that's what I'd like to know."

I listened and kept so still that I could hear myself

breathe, but I wanted to be sure that Berger would be friendly before I made known my presence.

"I've got to get into that loft, an' that's a fact, or I can't take that bundle to Blazing Star, an' if I don't there'll be a fuss an' fury an' mebbe I'll be found out, an' that'll spoil my game."

"Minne Berger!" I whispered.

"Oh! oh! oh! I'm found out. Who could know my name when there isn't anyone round but them Hessians an' Tories? It must be a Tory, an', if it is, I'm a gone coon."

"Minne Berger, do you want your ladder?"

"No; I mean, yes; I mean, I don't know what I do mean, but who speaks?"

Slowly I lowered the ladder and still kept in the background. I was a bit modest, for I was naked, and, well, I wanted to startle the farmer a bit first.

"Come up here, Minne Berger, if you can climb, but your knees seem weak."

I had not sufficiently disguised my voice, for I heard him say:

"That sounded like Amos, but what could bring him over from Elizabethtown at such a time."

"Come up, Berger, it is Amos," I said, and at that moment I felt his foot on the ladder.

When he reached the top I told such part of my story as I thought he might know without danger to my mission. I learned from him that, being suspected of having sympathy with the Colonial cause, he had heard that his farm was confiscated and a reward offered for him dead or alive. The hint was enough, and he left the place, only to return disguised that same night, and he had remained there ever since, going into the interior every day, carrying loads for the soldiers, who did not know him, and doing all sorts of menial work for them.

"Better than bein' killed," he said; "besides, I hear a lot, an' some day what I know may be of use to Congress."

I was sure that Minne Berger would be of use to me, at least for a time, so I asked if I could not help him carry his bundle.

"I guess you'd spoil the game, you'd be known, an' then it 'u'd be a case of gettin' our necks scragged."

"What about you?" I asked. "If you can trick 'em I can."

"Now I come to think of it, you're ugly enough to pass for a half-breed, or even a blooded Injun, an' I've got a rig out, moccasins an' all, an' if you'll get into it, you can come along."

My blood was boiling within me as I listened to the slur on my personal appearance, but he had not said I should be in the way, so I had to swallow the remarks about my ugliness. I agreed to become an Indian, and Berger certainly deserved credit for the transformation he made in my appearance, for he had some stuff with which he stained my face and arms, and I did look the color, if nothing else, of an Indian.

"Now don't you speak a word till we're alone, 'cause, if you do, you'll be pressed."

"What's that?"

"Why, they are seizin' all the strong chaps round about an' makin' 'em become soldiers of the king, an'

there's no escape, so I'll make it up that you're unable to talk the language an' you'll be safer."

When my disguise was completed we got down the ladder and started across the salt meadows to Blazing Star. I carried a bundle larger and heavier than the one borne by Berger.

"By George! What have you got there, my man?" an English officer asked, pointing at me.

Berger professed to misunderstand and put down his bundle and commenced to open it.

"No, no, you idiot, I don't care what you have in your pack, but what in the name of goodness is that ugly duckling there?"

"Injun, my lord."

"Indian, bah! I thought Indians were strong, and brave, and handsome, but this——"

I was strong and I knew it. Berger weighed only a little over a hundred and twenty pounds, though he looked much heavier. I caught him by the strong leather belt he wore and lifted him up until he was nearly at arm's length. The Englishman looked astonished, whistled, and scratched his head.

"Sell him?"

"No," said Berger; "he is a free Injun; he offered to help me take these bundles to Gen. Clinton."

We were allowed to proceed, and when we were sure that no one could hear us, Berger said, in a low voice:

"I'd no idea you were so strong; you'll win out with these Britishers; they just worship strength."

"Did I hurt or frighten you?"

"Nary a bit, I only feared you might speak."

"I know when I'm well off," I answered, as I again shouldered my pack and started ahead, but I paused before long and asked:

"Is Gen. Clinton really on Staten Island?"

"Yes, an' so is Gen. Howe, an' a great fleet is gatherin' in the Narrows. Hush!"

The caution was too late for, before it had fallen from his lips, we were both seized by strong arms from behind and thrown to the ground.

Fortunately the man who had seized me tripped as I fell, and he was on the ground as well. I quickly twisted over and caught him round the throat.

I looked him all over and saw that he wore the same uniform as did those who had fired on me in the early morning. I judged he was a Hessian, and I had already learned to look upon those hireling soldiers as being outside the pale of humanity.

My fingers closed round his throat, and I tightened my grasp until his eyes started from their sockets and his tongue hung out. I thought he had been rendered incapable of further mischief for a time, so I relaxed my grasp and tackled the one who was fast crushing the life out of poor Berger.

I was just within reach of him and could not resist raising my foot and giving him such a kick as he had never received before. That had the effect of diverting his attention from Berger, and I grappled with him as I had with the other, but not so effectually, for he fired a shot which I knew would soon bring the soldiers to the spot and lead to our arrest.

Catching hold of Berger, I dragged him into the wood and far enough away from the scene of our encounter to give us an advantage if the soldiers came.

I climbed a tree and watched, but the Hessian had

made good his escape and doubtless told such a story about his encounter that would make the brave foreigners scary of following us.

When danger of pursuit was over we returned to where we had dropped our packs and were glad to find that they were intact. As though keeping guard over them there lay the Hessian who had attacked me, and as we examined him, Berger exclaimed:

"By gosh, you did for him sure."

I had killed him.

He was my first victim in that long and terrible conflict.

"I think he deserved it," I said.

"He was a Hessian an' got his deserts."

How did I feel? Was I sorry? I had not shed his blood, but I had choked the life out of his body; his death was of my doing.

For a moment the thought sickened me, then a new feeling came over me which I have never been able to understand. I wanted to kill others.

From that moment I felt my mission was to kill.

It was a horrible feeling, but it was there, and I may as well be honest and admit it.

Had I been alone I think I should have started off and watched every opportunity to catch Hessians unawares and kill them, but my murderous anger was allayed and restrained by Minne Berger, who told me that we had not reached Gen. Clinton and that I must fulfill my part of the bargain.

In an hour I was a different creature and would not have thought of injuring even a Hessian, or of killing any human being.

When we reached Blazing Star, Berger gave up his bundles and received pay for carrying them. He craved permission for us both to stay the night with the soldiers, which was granted. I thought this was risky, for I expected that the Hessian would report the death of his fellow, and our lives, or certainly our liberty, would be in danger.

"Don't be alarmed," Berger whispered; "these are all Englishmen, and they dislike the Hessians as much as we do."

CHAPTER IV.

PLAYING INDIAN.

I made every inquiry of Minne Berger concerning the roads I must take to get to the headquarters of the British Army, and, after promising that I would return to him, he bade me Godspeed and pressed some money into my hand. I was loath to take it, but he assured me that he had plenty and that he could always get more, whereas he knew I was absolutely without that most useful commodity.

I soon learned the advantage of being mistaken for an Indian, for most of the Indian residents of Staten Island were either neutral or else were openly with the British.

"Whatever you do, my boy, do it openly," said Berger, and I thought he was either ignorant of what I had set out to accomplish or else was giving bad advice. When he saw that I doubted his wisdom, he explained in this way :

"If you skulk along in the woods escaping observa-

tion, and are accidentally seen, you will be treated as a spy and will go to prison or to the gallows. If you go along the road openly no one will think you a spy, and, though they may imagine you are foolish, you will be safer."

The road from Blazing Star took a sharp turn just outside the settlement, and I hurried along as soon as I knew I was out of sight of the camp, so that I might reach the Amboy Road, and, perhaps, manage to get to New Dorp before sunset.

I had found out that Gen. Howe was at the Rose and Crown farm at New Dorp, and that was the place I felt I must reach as soon as possible.

So intent was I in thinking out the best way to accomplish my work that I met with another of those mishaps which have followed my career.

I was at the top of a bank by the roadside, resting with my back against a tree, and deep in thought. I had chosen that position because I was sure no one passing along the road could see me.

I had rested a short time, and I think had taken a nap, for I certainly felt refreshed, when I fancied I

heard voices close to me. I looked round, but no one was on the bank, and then I leaned forward to look into the road. I did this without thinking what I was doing, for, had I done so, I should have remembered that the bank was nothing but sand.

As I leaned forward the sand gave way beneath my body and I slid down, not gracefully, but very rapidly, into the road, and, what was worse, I landed right in the midst of a group of citizens who were engaged in reading a paper.

In my descent I knocked over one portly man and stuck my moccasined feet in the face of another, while, when I came to a stop, I found myself sitting on the shoulders of a third. It can easily be imagined that those men were angry. Though it wasn't my fault, I did not ask them to sit at the foot of a sand bank, and if the sand slipped I was not responsible for that, but they shouted at me as though I had been a wild man of the woods instead of——. But, there, I had forgotten at the time that I was passing for an Indian.

When they had got over their anger and brushed the sand out of their eyes they asked me where I came

from and what I was doing listening to them. I had not listened, for I had slipped as soon as I heard the voices, and so I told them.

Minne Berger had whispered a word in my ear which he assured me would procure a welcome whenever I used it in the presence of any American patriots, and he was equally positive that it was unknown to the British. This word I uttered as though accidentally, but the big man whom I had bowled over repeated it with another which called for a third from me. This I gave, and then I was warmly welcomed, even though they still believed me to be an Indian.

"Have you heard the news?" asked one of the party.

"What news?"

"Why, our people have met at Philadelphia and signed a Declaration of Independence."

"What does that mean?"

"Why, that we are a free nation and not a province of England. We shall govern ourselves and——"

"Have King George as our own king?" I asked.

"No, you idiot, we have done with King George forever; we shall govern ourselves——"

"Who will be our king?"

"We are not going to have any; we are all going to be equal, no kings, no lords, but just everyday ordinary citizens."

"But will England let us?"

"We shall have to fight for it, but you see every man will now want to fight because he is doing so not for a foreigner, but for himself."

I had always been taught that a king was necessary, and I did not understand how a nation could get along without one, but I was very glad about that Declaration, and I felt more important, for I knew that if we had become a nation the war would not be a revolution but a war between two nations and we could not be treated as rebels.

"Do the English generals know?" I asked.

"I do not know," answered the big fellow. "I tried to keep any papers from reaching them, and I am on my way to Blazing Star to find one Minne Berger to whom I know the news will be welcome."

I left my new friends and proceeded by a short cut, of which they had told me, to the Rose and Crown.

When I got within sight of New Dorp I was almost frightened at the number of white tents I saw. There must have been thousands of them, and they were all put up in such regular lines that it had all the appearance of a large white city. I trembled as I thought that I had to pass right through the center of those streets, and I knew that at any minute I might be run through with a bayonet or have a hole bored in me by a bullet. I was almost wishing that I could turn back, for the task seemed hopeless, when I heard a very vigorous exclamation, followed by a string of words, that would not look well if written down, for they sounded bad enough.

In front of me, not ten yards away, there had suddenly appeared an English officer, all decked out in gold lace, which certainly did look fine on his red coat. He had high pigskin boots on and spurs were on his heels, so I knew that he was an officer of high rank.

"Redskin, by all that's wonderful!" he exclaimed, though I have not written the adjectives he used nor the expletives with which he expressed himself with such emphasis.

He caught hold of my shoulder and said :

“Speak English?”

“A little only,” I answered.

“Understand it?”

I shook my head as though I was not sure of what he meant. I remembered Berger’s advice :

“Don’t know any more than you can help ; the less you know the more you’ll hear.”

“I want a servant ; will you be mine?”

I shook my head and then began to smile. I stooped down and made believe to be polishing his boots, and then I mimicked brushing his clothes.

“Yes ; that is what I want.”

I nodded my head and took hold of his sword hilt as though I would draw it ; I was going to show him how I would polish the blade, but he snatched it away and beckoned me to follow him.

He entered a large tent, and I was surprised to find how comfortable it was, though the one room had to serve as parlor, bedroom and everything.

He gave me a lot of belts and saber straps to clean and pipeclay, and I was going outside to do it, when he

caught me by the shoulders and pushed me down on a stool. I did not speak, but nodded.

Presently another officer entered and looked at me.

"Picked him up," exclaimed my master. "Treasure. Can have him close to you, and he cannot understand a word, so I can talk and it does not matter whether he is here or not."

"Sure?"

"Positive. I've tried him."

"Where does he come from?"

"Ask him."

I knew that I should require all my wits about me, for I had admitted that I could speak a little English, and, of course, could understand some, but I must play the simpleton to the best of my ability.

"What is your name?"

"Quedar."

"Well, Quedar, who made you?"

"I grew up in a salt meadow."

"Do you know who is king of this country?"

"We call him chief; he has gone to the hunting ground to find game."

"Don't waste your time, Jackson; he is as ignorant as any other Indian, and I have a lot to tell you."

I went on with my pipeclaying, and never raised my head. I took in every word, but I do not think a muscle of my face moved.

"Do you know, Jackson, what that paper was which Gen. Vaughan brought?"

"No; was it important?"

"It was a Declaration of Independence, signed by the representatives of the provinces in what they called a convention."

"Independence of what?"

"Of King George, of Great Britain! They have actually dared to set up as a nation, and they are going to be a republic."

"Ha! ha! ha! What an amusing thing it is, to be sure!"

"I am afraid it will not prove amusing."

"You do not think, Granger, that there is anything serious in the affair?"

"Look here, Jackson, these fellows have fought well

as rebels, and if they get it into their heads that they are an independent nation they will fight all the harder."

"And the end will come quicker."

"Oh, of course, they cannot win in the end, but some of us will bite the dust before peace comes."

"What did Gen. Howe say?"

"I was sitting beside the general, who was engaged in earnest conversation about building redoubts at various points on the island. Gen. Cleveland, the chief engineer of his majesty's army, was explaining which points he thought it practicable to defend.

"Two or three places had been pointed out, when Gen. Vaughan entered. He was so excited that he even forgot to salute, though Howe is a great stickler on that, as you know, and without any apology, he pushed a newspaper between Howe and Cleveland, and said :

" 'Read that.' "

"Gen. Howe looked at the heading, and read aloud : 'Declaration of Independencè.' He smiled—you know his smile, Jackson."

"Rather! I shall never forget how he smiled on

Mistress Tracy in Boston when she told him that she was going to enlist in the colonial cause, and Howe smiled and said, 'I see, madam, I shall not be at Province House to entertain you, but Gen. Washington will, and you could not live if banished from the official residence.' "

"Yes, I remember that scene, and it appeared to me that Howe was nearer threatening a lady with vengeance than he ever before had been. But, to my story. Gen. Howe's smile died away, as he read a few paragraphs of the so-called Declaration, then he handed the paper to Cleveland, and said, 'Read it aloud, Cleveland.'

"Sir William gazed across the tented fields that spread out right down to the bay, and it looked as though he was trying to see the water, and find out if his brother's ships were coming.

"For fully three minutes after Cleveland had read the last signature to the document, his excellency remained gazing from the window, then he turned and thanked Cleveland, and added: 'These men are certainly determined.'

“He waved his hand toward the map, indicating that there was more serious work to be thought of just then than the building of fortifications. Cleveland rolled up the map and placed it on a chair, and in a minute Howe had thrown the newspaper on the top of it. Then he turned to Vaughan, and, looking him in the face, said: ‘General, I——’ but that was all. He did not finish the sentence.”

“What are we going to do?”

“That will be decided to-night at a council of war.”

“I would like to be present.”

“You were a fool to offend the commander-in-chief, but a bigger fool not to apologize. It is not too late; he values your opinion. Go to him, Jackson; a few words will be sufficient, and——”

“If one word would suffice I would not speak it. He treated me like——”

“Do not recall that time; no good can come of it.”

“It is all very well to say forget, but when a man is as grossly insulted as I was, forgetfulness is not possible.”

"You brought it on yourself. If you had not spoken as you did of Priscilla Beverley——"

"Do not mention her name; that is past. I'll have her yet. She spurned me when I bade her good-by; she thinks that she will be the bride of that fellow Lowry, but I'll have her, even though Howe himself was my rival."

I had heard all this and was careful to impress it on my mind, though I did not understand much of it. I only knew that Gen. Howe had a big army with him, and was expecting some reinforcements, and then he would make a stand against the Americans. I knew that he had read the Declaration of Independence, but beyond that I had learned nothing of real value.

I had finished the work given me to do and had fallen off my stool and lay curled up in a ball, apparently asleep, but my ears were very wide open. I kept my eyes tightly closed for fear they might betray me, and therefore did not know that Granger had risen, but I knew it in a moment, for he gave me a very vigorous kick which straightened me out and caused me to jump to my feet. I ejaculated a few Indian

words and then held up my hand as a signal that I desired pardon for falling asleep.

I pulled Granger's boots off and helped him put on another pair, and then he stalked out, leaving me alone in the tent.

CHAPTER V.

SUCCESS.

I stayed a long time in the tent, and then I thought I might venture out and, it might be, hear something of importance.

I had no desire to be challenged, though Gen. Granger had given me a pass setting forth that I was his servant, so I thought I was safe, but I knew there was no absolute safety if I were caught listening.

I crawled along in the thick grass, rousing up the mosquitoes, which were very plentiful that summer, but I did not mind them, though my arms were bare. I was walking in the shade of some cedars which threw their branches over some of the officers' tents, when I caught my foot in a root and fell headlong against the side of a tent, causing the canvas to give way and land me sprawling inside.

I was instantly seized and the guard called.

I was in Queer Street; I could be charged with spy-

ing or I could be suspected of prowling about with a view to stealing from any tent I found unoccupied.

Whichever charge was made against me, the result would be the same, for death was the penalty in each case.

I was bound hand and foot and dragged down the white-tented street to a large tent which was the camp prison.

I would not speak a word, but merely showed my pass, which was snatched out of my hand by a young ensign.

"What is the charge?" the officer on duty asked.

"Forcing his way into Col. Kernochan's tent with a view to robbery."

"Ah, Gen. Cleveland left his plans of the fortifications there; they were what he wanted. He is a spy, that's sure."

I heard and understood every word, but made no sign.

"Col. Kernochan has the plan of campaign in his tent, and if that got into the hands of the enemy we might as well set sail for England."

"I wish we were on our way there now; these cursed mosquitoes are enough to drive a fellow mad."

"What shall be done with the prisoner to-night?"

"Is he bound securely?"

"Yes, he cannot escape."

"Then leave him until morning, when he can be taken before the general."

"I think we had better get rid of him to-night; I do not like having such a dangerous spy in my keeping."

"Col. Kernochan has an engagement to supper to-night; that is why he took the plan of campaign and the maps to his tent, so no charge can be made before morning."

"I wanted to steal away an hour myself," said the officer on duty.

"That is easy; a sentry can watch him; besides, he is tied so securely that he could not escape, even if no one was on guard."

To all appearances, that was true, for I could not separate my legs and so could not walk, and my hands were fastened behind my back, and so rendered useless.

I do not know how long I lay cramped up on the

floor awaiting a chance to try and escape, but at last only the sentry was left, and he came and examined my bonds and was satisfied. He accordingly sauntered to the next tent, a distance of perhaps fifty yards away, so that he might have a confab with a crony.

That was my opportunity. I had so placed my hands while they were being bound that the knots were really slip-nooses, which by a little effort I could unfasten. It was an old Indian trick sometimes used by the medicine men as a miracle. By a twist of my right elbow I was able to loosen the noose on that arm, and after a few more twirls and twists my arm was free; then, of course, it was easy to get out of the rest. I wound the rope round my body for two reasons, one being that I had no desire to give away my secret, which would be discovered if they got the rope, and then I thought the rope might be of use to me afterwards.

I crawled under the tent on the opposite side to the entrance.

It was nice to be free.

I drew a few long breaths, and then crawled along

until I was close to the tent from which I had been taken.

I cautiously raised the canvas on one side to see if anyone was inside.

A soldier was seated on a stool close to a table on which was the map I wanted, and a package of papers which I felt sure was the plan of campaign which Col. Kernochan, as secretary of his excellency, was to copy in the morning in duplicate.

I wriggled my body under the canvas noiselessly, and before the soldier could give an alarm I had him by the throat and threw him down. I nearly throttled him, but fortunately he became unconscious, and thus I was saved from murder in that instance.

I got the papers and crawled out of the tent.

Thus far I had been successful, but the worst part of my work was before me.

Twice I was tripped up by hidden roots of trees, and once I ran right into the arms of a sentry, who, thanks to my tawny skin and savage appearance, was so frightened that he dared not give an alarm.

From New Dorp to Decker's ferry was a matter of

seven miles, and that was the nearest point to Elizabethtown.

To walk seven miles through the enemy's country with most important papers was no mean thing to do, but I was firmly determined to succeed, or die in the attempt.

After walking two hours, for I had to go very slowly, and hide often, I found that I had lost my way, for I was by the side of a lake which I had heard called Silver Lake, and that was two miles out of my way. However, I had twice gone over that ground with Uncle Van Tyne when he visited the island to barter some cattle, and so I knew my way. I turned off to the west to Boiling Spring, and from there to Kruzers Cove, which was on the Achter Kill, and opposite to an important camp of the Continental army.

The next difficulty was to get across, for if I swam I should damage my papers, and there was only one ferry that I knew of which would allow an Indian to cross, and that was Decker's.

I walked along the water side, looking up and down the stream in the hope that I might find a boat, which

I should not have hesitated to use, even though it might never again reach its rightful owner.

I saw several boats across the Kill, but not one on the island side, and I began to despair.

I had made a sharp turn near Denyse's wharf, when I found myself confronted by a big and apparently well-armed soldier.

"Hey, you!" he shouted, though I was close to him. "Where are you going?"

"Just along here," was my answer.

"I say you are not; you are going with me."

"Where to?"

"Look here, Injun, you've no right to be prowling about here, and I shall take you to the picket post."

"What's that?"

"You'll know soon enough; come along."

"You go first."

"Not much; you walk ahead."

I declined and was wondering how I was going to escape, for I knew that the order had gone forth to arrest anyone walking along the shore without a per-

mit, when a sudden thought occurred to me—I would play Indian some more.

I squatted down until I nearly touched the ground, and the soldier watched me very closely.

“None of that,” he shouted, though I do not think that he had any idea of the trick I was going to play him.

He stooped over me to catch me under the arms and lift me up, but I was too quick for him, for as he stooped he opened his legs, and I forced my head between and jumped up, throwing him full length on the ground. He was so confused that I had time to get into the bushes of a garden which at that point ran down to the water’s edge.

When he looked for me I was out of sight, and he passed along the path on the opposite side of the garden without seeing me.

When he had gone some distance he turned and again passed me so close that I could hear his heavy breathing. I dared not stir or he would have seen me. I knew that he had gone to the picket post to report, and that in a few minutes a search would be made for me.

I left my hiding place and ran speedily along the path until I was again at an open part of the river. Here I found a boat. I lost no time in getting into it, and I pulled to the middle of the stream before I stopped to consider for what point I should make.

I had not much time for thought, for a gunshot report broke in upon the silence and a bullet struck the water only about three boat lengths behind me.

I began to pull out of danger, slowly and deliberately, for I did not want to tire myself too much, and I knew I was safe unless the enemy got a boat.

I turned over a sack which lay in the bottom of the boat and could not resist giving a cry of joy as I saw a gun and a powder flask and can of bullets. How they came to be left in the boat I could not understand, but I did not care very much; they were there and that was enough for me.

I examined the gun and found that it was a new one and already loaded. I covered the powder flask with the sack to prevent the water splashing on it, and then took up my oars again, but as I did so I turned my head and to my horror saw that I was being pursued by

three men seated in a pretty heavy boat. They had gained on me so much that I was within gun range.

This must be settled right now, I said to myself, and I threw down the oars and picked up the gun.

I was known as a good shot and I must keep up with my record.

I raised the gun to my shoulder and aimed quickly at the right oar, which I struck and splintered so that it was useless. The boat swung round and I knew that I could pull out of danger unless the pursuers should fire at and hit me. I had loaded my gun and again raised it, but as I did so I saw a gun pointed at me and my practiced eye took in at a glance that the gunner had the bead on me. I don't know whether I was more foolhardy than usual or what possessed me, but I changed my sight a hair's breadth and fired. It seemed that we both fired at the same time, but I must have got a second ahead of my enemy, for my bullet struck his gun barrel and caused it to rise, but the bullet deflected and I saw the man fall over into the water, proving that my missive had done good work.

I had no desire to take life unnecessarily, so I took

up the oars and pulled as fast as I could bend to the work, but a bullet passed over my shoulder and tore a piece of skin therefrom in its flight.

“That’s the last shot you will fire,” I exclaimed, and I picked up my gun and loaded it again. I looked at the boat and saw but one object, and that was the man who had fired at me. I aimed for his heart and again the leaden messenger became one of death.

There was no place to land opposite where I was, and so I had to pull up the stream, gaining on the other boat, which was now occupied by but one man. He worked hard, bending low with every stroke, but my boat was lighter and I had no difficulty in getting out of range, especially as I now pulled into the Jersey shore and forced my boat along among the long weeds and grass which grew out into the Kill.

As soon as I was able to effect a landing I made fast the boat and sprang ashore, taking my gun and ammunition with me. I had left the boat only a few minutes when I discovered that I had left the most important document lying on the sack.

I was back at the boat in a jiffy, but as I reached it I saw a man in it and about to cut it loose.

It was no time for squeamishness, so I again fired and had the knowledge that the man was disabled. I rushed at him and snatched up the roll of paper before he could recover from his fright.

"Keep the boat, if you want it," I shouted as I ran.

I dare not stop to load my gun, for I was sure that he would follow and it might be that he would get the papers from me, and if he did not, I should most likely be arrested and kept in the lockup until it was too late to be of service to our cause.

"Halt!"

The order came from the front and I was running into danger.

I had to obey, for I was more useful alive than dead, and so I called out:

"What is it you want?"

"That is not an Indian's voice," said the sergeant.

"No, I am an American and on a mission."

"Ha! ha! ha! Sounds like a fairy story," the man exclaimed.

I had recognized the uniform worn by the sergeant as belonging to Col. Herd's corps, and so I was with friends, if I could only make them think that I was not an enemy.

"Can you tell me where I can find Col. Herd?" I asked in good English.

"What do you want with him?"

"That I cannot tell you, but on your head be the consequence if you do not answer."

"I am picket sergeant, and to me you must tell your business."

"I refuse, and unless you take me to your captain at once I shall report you."

"I like that; what next?"

One of the private soldiers whispered to the sergeant and it was evident that the whispering was of some use, for I was seized by one of the men and my gun taken from me, then I was made to march along with the picket squad to the post.

There I found the captain and to him I told part of my story, but it was evident he did not believe me,

for he ordered a squad to escort me to the camp, and I heard him say:

"If he attempts to escape shoot him!"

In half an hour I was with Col. Herd. He looked at me and asked my name. I said that names did not matter, I was only there to give some information.

"Well, out with it."

I told him what I had heard about Gen. Howe and that reinforcements were expected daily, then I added that the island was to be fortified, but only for defensive purposes; that the real object was the capture of New York.

"What proof have you of this?"

I handed him the map showing the redoubts which were to be erected, and he smiled.

"Very good, very good, Indian; this will be useful."

I then handed to him the plan of campaign and he read the penciled draft several times.

"Where did you get this?"

"From Col. Kernochan's tent," I replied.

"On Staten Island?"

"Yes, at New Dorp."

"Look me in the eye, youngster. You are no Indian."

"No, colonel."

"Who are you?"

"Do you remember telling a would-be recruit that you would not have him because he would be always in the way?"

"I cannot recall."

"Do you not remember advising a boy to return to his uncle——"

"Ah! To Farmer Van Tyne?"

"Yes; well, I am Amos. Have I been in the way?"

"You—Amos?"

"Yes, Amos, who was given up to a Tory by you. You said that anyone who could get information from the enemy on Staten Island would be rewarded. I have done it."

"Right nobly you have done so. You must tell me the whole story."

"I am hungry and I want a wash; I want to get into Christian clothes, then I will tell you all I have passed through."

"And you can name your reward."

"That is easily done. I only want to join the American army and to be given a chance to fight for my country."

The colonel gave orders to have some clothes found for me and I was sent to the officers' mess for a good meal, even though I was only a dirty-looking Indian, to all appearance.

CHAPTER VI.

A DARING DEED.

"Amos, you are wanted at headquarters," an orderly said, as he thrust his head unceremoniously in the window of the room in which I had been told I could spend the night.

I had partaken of a good meal, washed the stain off my face, and got into some decent clothes and then threw myself down on a settee to rest.

I got up and followed the orderly to the house occupied by Col. Herd. I was at once shown into his presence and the orderly received instructions that we were not to be disturbed.

As soon as I was alone with the colonel he asked :

"Do you know the value of the documents you brought me?"

"Yes."

"What value do you think they possess?"

"If Gen. Washington had them I think he would say

that no value could be placed upon them, for they are priceless."

Herd seemed astonished to hear me speak like that, for he had shared the opinion held by many that I was an ignorant, uncultured farm boy, whereas I had made the best use of whatever educational advantages had been thrown in my way and I understood far more than I got credit for.

"You are right, my boy; but I thought that——" He hesitated, stammered and then blurted out: "I thought you might want to sell them."

"Col. Herd, how dare you say such a thing? If that is what you had to say when you sent for me, I will at once leave, for your words are an insult."

"Excuse me, but I knew you were a poor boy, and——"

"Don't you think that the poor, as you call them, have as great a love of country as the rich? If the war continues who will be the readiest to shed their blood, without any hope of gain—the rich or the poor? No, colonel, you have much to learn. I have seen that while the rich and well-to-do are often Tories, I have

not found a poor man who had any sympathy with England."

I had spoken quickly, I was excited and I was half inclined to strike the officer.

"Calm yourself, Amos; it is quite possible you are right. I only thought that those who had money might be able to help the cause without hope of reward, whereas the men who had to depend on a day's labor for a day's food might hope to be paid for their services."

"You have not read history, colonel. I have learned, young and foolish as I may be, that whenever rewards are given out by a nation the wealthy get the largest share and those who do the hardest work get the least."

"You have thought deeply on this subject."

"I love my country. I think that it is a glorious thing to be free, and what I have done has been because of that feeling. If I'm not in the way I should like to continue to be of service, yes, even if I have to shed my blood, or lose my life; but then you once told

me that I was not wanted, for I was sure to be in the way."

"A silly speech, for which I ask forgiveness. You have rendered a service which cannot be overestimated, and I am going to ask you to undertake another mission, perhaps quite as hazardous."

"If I can be of service, command me, but let me say that no reward do I look for. I must have food and clothes, but beyond that, love of country will suffice."

"I stand rebuked. Pardon me for misjudging you, but believe me it was more a class than an individual that called forth the remark."

"And the class you misjudge quite as much as the individual."

"Amos, can you, will you, take these documents to Gen. Washington, in New York?"

"If you so order."

"That is not what I asked; I have no right to order, but will you volunteer?"

"If you think I can succeed."

"I do not know of anyone who would if you failed."

"I am ready."

"For much of the way a pass will ensure you safe conduct, but the enemy is alert, and active in some parts; you may have to fight, but I want to impress upon you that better die than let these papers fall into the hands of the enemy."

"I will guard them with my life."

"And if you are close pressed?"

"I will destroy them before that."

"Good! Now be ready to start in the morning."

"Why not to-night?"

"You ought to rest."

"I can rest on the way."

"All right, I am going to provide you with a companion——"

My heart sank within me. I did not want to share the danger or the glory with anyone, but the thought came to me instantly that two might make a better fight than one, and therefore safety might be ensured.

"You do not like company," Col. Herd added, as he saw my start of surprise.

"I think it wiser that there should be two."

"Three days ago a young Boy of Liberty came to me

with a command from Gen. Washington himself. I should say that the command was to Gen. Charles Lee, but he was ill and so I had to act. This brave boy is returning and will accompany you."

"The Boys of Liberty are regular soldiers, are they not?"

"Yes, and if you want to engage in the conflict I should advise you to enlist in their ranks."

"Will this gentleman be ready to start at once?"

"We will find out."

Col. Herd called for his orderly and bade him summon Ensign Edward Billington.

"Did you say Billington?" I asked.

"Yes; have you heard of him?"

"I have heard Minnie Berger speak of Dashing Abe Billington."

"He is his brother."

I was eager now to make the acquaintance of Billington and could hardly restrain my impatience. I had not long to wait, for a brave-looking youth, about my own age, entered with the orderly and Herd told the soldier he could retire.

"Ensign Billington, this is Amos Van Tyne——"

"Not Van Tyne," I answered, quickly, "but Mersereau."

"Amos Mersereau, then. And you will both start as soon as convenient to New York with important information for Gen. Washington."

Billington looked me all over from head to foot and then, with a boy's impulsiveness, put out his hand, and as he grasped mine, said:

"I like you, I hope we may be friends."

"I hope so."

"Your name is Amos, is it not? Mine is Ted; never think of calling me anything else."

From that moment we were fast friends; it was Amos and Ted. The very fact that we called each other in that fashion proved that we had cottoned to each other.

Col. Herd told Ted that the documents were to be in my charge unless I should for any reason think they were safer with Ted. He gave us some information which he said he thought had not better be put

in writing, among which was the appointment of local men to high offices by the British, namely Christopher Billop, of Staten Island, to be lieutenant-colonel; Skinner, of Perth Amboy, a colonel; and Delancey, of New York, to the rank of brigadier-general. "These appointments," said the colonel, "will have considerable influence over the people, causing many to join the Tories, but if Congress will offer bigger rewards to men of merit the evil may be counteracted."

It was close upon midnight before we were ready to start and we were strongly advised to await the rising of the sun before we commenced our journey, especially as the first part of the way would be through the country occupied by our friends.

This advice we took and we left the presence of Col. Herd thinking to take some rest.

I soon found that Ted was of a very active disposition and he suggested that as so short a time would elapse before we started we should go down to the Kill and see if we could detect anything going on across the water.

I was ready, and only took time to secrete my papers and get my gun before I joined my companion.

We got down to the water's edge and looked across to the Staten Island shore.

"What are they doing over there?" Ted asked.

"I think they are building a battery, or at least an earthwork at Elizabethtown Point."

"Can you paddle a canoe?"

"Yes; can you?"

"I guess I can as well as any Indian," said Ted, boastfully.

"What made you ask?"

"I see a canoe down here and I thought we might paddle halfway across and see plainer what the enemy is up to."

No sooner had he spoken than I started down the little bank to the canoe. The adventure was just to my liking. I was followed closely by Ted, who was very agile. I stopped very suddenly, fancying I heard a noise, when Ted, who was close upon my heels, fell

against me, and we both rolled down to the water, only saving ourselves by a narrow margin from going in.

"What did you stop for?" Ted asked.

"What did you fall over me for and knock me down?" I retorted; then we both laughed.

"You will have lots of episodes like that if you are with me much," I added, "for I am always getting into hot water——"

"You were nearly in cold that time."

"Right again, but I warn you that my curiosity often gets me into trouble and I am always in some one's way."

"All right so long as I know," said Ted, "but let us get into the boat."

I found Ted just as good with the paddle as myself and he could move as noiselessly as any Indian. I had imagined I was an adept, but Ted was my superior.

"Ted, you rascal!" I exclaimed, "we have got within gun range. What shall we do?"

It was true, Ted had paddled so quickly that we had gone far beyond the point we intended to reach before we were aware.

"Sneak in a little further and fire a couple of shots at those earthworks men," he answered, coolly.

Ted plied the paddle until we were near enough to see the men flitting about engaged in building one of the redoubts which was described on the map.

"Hessians," Ted whispered.

"Yes, the English are making them do the hard work," I answered, proud of my knowledge.

"Glad of it, the miserable cutthroats! Do you know, Amos, that King George has purchased seventeen thousand of these Hessians for thirty-six dollars apiece and turned them loose to murder us."

"I thought the king was a Christian."

"A fig for his Christianity when he will do a thing like that. Now, Amos, get your gun ready and select your man. I will steady the canoe while I fire. Oh, I have done it before!"

Ted stood up, his feet spread wide open so that they were on the extreme edges of the canoe, then he whispered:

"Are you ready?"

"Yes."

"Fire!"

The reports rang out, the canoe rocked until I thought we should be capsized, but before I had time to express a fear, Ted was seated in the boat and the paddle was plied vigorously.

We had disabled two men and had succeeded in getting beyond range before the rest had decided what to do. A few shots were fired after us, but they fell far behind, and Ted laughed at our adventure.

"Ted, you're a wonder!" I exclaimed, but he only laughed.

I felt perfectly happy at having such a companion, and I had to confess later that a more daring youth or desperate fighter never lived than Ted Billington.

"Have you seen service?" I asked.

"I was wounded and invalided home, but my brother was able to go on and, my goodness! he has won a name for himself."

"You mean Dashing Abe?"

"Yes. My father is fighting also."

"How glorious! Are you a Yorker?"

That was the first time I saw any sign of disgust or displeasure manifested by my companion.

"A Yorker? No, I am a New Englander, a direct descendent of Capt. Abram Billington, who came over in the *Mayflower*."

"Really?"

"Yes, really. John Billington, his wife and two sons came over in the *Mayflower* and my ancestor was the eldest son, Abram, so you see I am not a Yorker."

"How glorious it must be to have such ancestry! I know nothing of mine, I only know that a Mersereau came from France a hundred years ago and settled on Staten Island; perhaps I came from his family."

"Most likely you did, but, Amos, I think it is better to create a new name than to brag of an old one."

"I have only that chance, Ted, but I will try and make a name which will live."

"Good for you! So will I."

"Hold fast, we are in shallow water and shall beach the canoe in a moment."

We jumped out and ran up the bank, without meet-

ing with any more adventures. We had made our mark that night, for later I was able to read of our daring acts in a paper which came into camp, for the enemy had actually printed an account of the attack on the earthworks by a party of rebels in canoes.

CHAPTER VII.

A PRISONER.

As soon as the sun rose we set out for our trip through New Jersey and across to New York. Ted, who had so recently taken the journey, was the best of guides and he suggested that we should proceed along the Kill for some distance and then strike into the interior to the west of Newark Bay and from there to the western bank of the Hudson River.

I placed myself in his hands, for the road was new to me, as I had never been much north of Elizabethtown, though I knew all points south to Perth Amboy and round the bay to Red Bank.

We had gone some distance without meeting with any adventure, when Ted suddenly threw up his hands, and exclaimed:

"We are wrong!"

"Wrong?"

"Yes, we have lost our way."

"Do you mean it?"

"I do; it is a solemn fact. I thought I should recognize the road by which I came, but I am lost."

"What shall we do?"

"You say that the country is all with us?"

"Not all, but nearly so."

"Then let us go to the first house and ask our way."

"That would be dangerous, we might strike a Tory."

"What, then?"

"We should be taken prisoners."

"My dear Amos, you are very verdant; in other words childish. If we find a Tory we must talk Tory talk; if we find a friend we can act accordingly."

"But how are we to know?"

"Trust me."

"Two roads branch off here. Suppose we try the one to the right."

"I thought we ought to go to the left; that seems to me to be the right road."

"Whichever you choose, only remember that I have documents of great value."

"How could I forget? Come along, I see a house right ahead of us, and it looks inviting."

We walked to the left and soon came to an old mansion which bore every trace of being the homestead of some old settler; it did look inviting, and we were tired.

We walked boldly up to the house and found a large and fierce-looking dog chained within easy distance of the door.

He growled and showed his teeth in a far from pleasant manner, but a pleasant voice bade him lie down, and the same voice called out:

"What is it? Who are you?"

"We have lost our way," Ted replied.

"Poor fellow! and where might you be going?"

This questioning, even though the voice was so charming, was not what we wanted, and I answered:

"We are tired as well and would like to rest a few minutes."

"How silly of me! Wait a minute and I will open the door."

The minute seemed a long one, and no doubt it was, for when the door opened we saw a young and pretty girl, who was fastening one of those quaint handker-

chiefs across her breast which was characteristic of the Dutch settlers.

"Come right in, and a glass of milk, fresh from the cow—oh, you must not doubt it! for I had only finished milking a little before you came—will refresh you."

We walked into a large kitchen with the floor well sanded and so clean that you could have eaten from it. We found seats by a long pine table, and our young hostess quickly placed before us large steins filled with thick, creamy milk.

The maiden asked us where we had come from and where we were journeying, the two questions we were not prepared to answer without thought.

I tried to turn the subject into other channels after saying that we wished to reach Newark, but she returned to it and again asked from whence we had come. Before we could answer she had almost taken away our breath by saying:

"You need not tell. I am a witch, you know, or at least they all say so, and I can read your thoughts."

"That is good, for then you can guide us without

any difficulty and we shall be able to steer our course straighter than if we had to trust to our own judgment."

"What are you talking about?" she asked. "You seem as though you had suddenly lost your senses. I do not understand what you mean by 'steering your course'; I am not going with you. Did you meet any soldiers on your way here?"

"No; are there any around?"

"Lots of them, and I should not be surprised if we had some fighting before long."

"Were the soldiers——"

"English, you would ask. Why, I suppose so, or there would be no fighting. If you do not mind I think that one of you would do well to go out and ask my father the way to Newark, I see him in the cow yard."

"I thought you would tell us."

"He would like to put you on your way himself."

"Then we will both go."

"That is unkind to leave me after I have tried to

entertain you. Why will not one of you stay with me?"

"I will go, while my friend shall stay with you," I said, at once, but she frowned and tapped the floor with her little foot and for a moment she looked real angry, then she turned to Ted, and in the sweetest voice said:

"You go and talk to father about the way and ask him to come here to see your friend."

Ted rose and left the kitchen. I was flattered by the preference she had shown by wanting me to stay with her, though I was more bashful than Ted.

We had not been alone more than a minute when she changed her tone completely and harshly exclaimed:

"You are my prisoner!"

I thought it was a joke and my bashfulness left me as I laughed and replied:

"I am proud to be the prisoner of so lovely a jailer."

"Are you? We shall see. Now give me those papers, quick!"

"What papers?"

"Do not waste time. I can save your life and I will do so, but I must have the papers first."

I began to fear that there was something more than a joke in her action and I looked toward the door.

"You cannot escape, it is locked and barred by this time."

"But my friend——"

"Is all right; the soldiers can take care of him and I can take care of you. Quick! I have only a minute; give me the papers."

"And if I refuse?"

"Then I shall take them," she replied, at the same time drawing a heavy pistol from under her apron and covering me with it.

I was at a disadvantage and yet I would not give up the papers. I sought to gain time by asking:

"Are you not mistaking me for some one else?"

She kept the pistol point covering me as she drew nearer and in a loud whisper said:

"You have the plan of campaign drawn up by Gen. Howe and some maps. Quick! give them to me."

"You are mistaken, believe me. I—I——"

"How foolish you are! A few moments more and the soldiers will be in the room and I cannot save you."

As she uttered the last word I saw her face flush and I knew she had heard what I had, and that was the angry voices of some soldiers.

She caught hold of my arm and dragged me—I was too much surprised to resist—to the wall, and then she pressed her finger on a piece of beading, or chair rail, which went round the room, and a panel slid back, showing me a large closet.

"In there, quick, or you will be shot down without a moment's notice!"

I do not know why I got the idea that she really wanted to save me, but I felt confidence in her, and I stepped into the closet and heard the panel slip quickly into its place. Then I was conscious that she had opened a window.

Almost instantly a number of soldiers were in the room and in an almost brutal voice asked her:

"Where is he?"

"Whom do you refer to?"

"You know well enough. I tell you that if you have helped him to escape you will pay dearly for it."

"Do you mean the boy who was here just now?"

"You know I do. Come, now, where is he?"

"You can answer that question better than I can."

"What do you mean?"

"Do you not see that open window? Do you think a girl could keep a strong boy here when a window like that is so handy and unfastened?"

"Did he escape?"

"Yes."

"And you did not give an alarm? Why did you keep one here and let the other go?"

"You got the other; was not that enough?"

"He was as slippery as an eel; we did not get him. Is it possible we have lost both?"

"That you must answer for yourselves; he is not here, is he?"

The sergeant crossed to the window, which was one of those which acted as an additional door, opening down to the ground. He looked out and then,

with an oath, declared that the maid should be called to account for letting the prisoners escape.

I heard every word and was more surprised than ever.

It seemed as though the girl was trying to save me, and it might be that her father was acting in collusion with her and had aided Ted's escape.

The closet in which I was a prisoner had evidently been designed by the first owner of the building as a place in which to store his valuables, and even his family, in case of a raid by the Indians, who were far from friendly to the settlers in those days when the house was built.

It was built of stone, though the house itself was of wood, and I had known of two other places like it, so I concluded that I was in a fireproof and strong room, but it would be impossible to stay long, for the ventilation was very poor.

I waited for what seemed to be an eternity and no sound reached me.

I was getting tired, and everyone knows that the nerves are unstrung when the body is tired. I fancied

that I was to be kept there until I was stupefied through want of air or else starved to death. I grew desperate and felt all around the walls in order to find the panel, but to no avail. I then remembered that the panel would be iron and made rough on the inside, so that in case the vault was used as a prison the victim could not find the place by which he had entered.

When my mind was filled with these phantoms and fears I heard a voice calling:

"Are you all right?"

"Yes," I answered.

"Wait patiently a little longer, it is not safe yet."

"Let me out and I will never forget your kindness."

"Will you give me the papers?"

"I will thank you, I will do anything in the world for you, but I have no papers belonging to myself, and if I have some which are another's I shall defend them with my life."

"Silly boy!"

"Will you let me out?"

"I dare not, unless you give me the papers."

"I have none to give."

"Then you must stay where you are."

"I am suffocating!" I cried.

"I will remedy that, but perhaps I had better let you stay as you are."

"You are cruel."

"You are the first that ever said so."

"But do you not think you are very cruel to keep me here?"

There was no answer and I waited as patiently as I could, but it was hard work. I felt the air becoming cooler and fresher, and I knew that by some means the place was getting ventilated, though how I could not find out.

I called out, but there was no answer. I placed my ear against the wall and tried to hear what was going on beyond, but not a sound reached me until I was getting desperate and was about to shout for help, when I heard voices getting nearer my prison house. I listened intently and plainly heard the girl say:

"I shall get the papers, never doubt me."

In a gruffer voice came the response:

"Better let me take them, it will be the safest, and we shall get the reward just the same."

"You would hurt him."

"What of that?—he is only a rebel."

"Let me try again."

"I am afraid you are too soft-hearted, but I will give you one more chance."

Then all was again silent.

CHAPTER VIII.

A FEMALE MYSTERY.

I was getting very weary and angry as well, but I was powerless. I was a prisoner with no chance of escape.

How long I stayed in that vault I had no means of knowing, but it seemed like days, or even weeks.

A slight grating sound fell on my ear and I wondered whether deliverance was near or a fate far different to what I desired.

The panel slid back and a tiny ray of light entered the vault. I watched closely and saw that the girl, who entered, did not secure the panel, but only drew it to, leaving it unfastened.

A mad idea possessed me. I was strong, she was weak. Why not overcome her and make my exit through the panel? It certainly looked like a strong temptation. She read my thoughts, for she said, laughing as she spoke:

“No, you would not gain anything, even if you did

overpower me. Escape from the kitchen is impossible unless I give the word."

"What are you going to do with me?"

"What a question! You are my prisoner and I can get a large reward for you."

"Am I so valuable?"

"It seems so, though it is not you, after all, but the papers you stole from Col. Kernochan's tent."

"How do you know that?"

"Ah! You do not deny it."

"Deny what?"

"That you have the papers, and that they are valuable."

"You imagine things. But suppose it is true, what then?"

"You are a prisoner, and if the papers are found on you, why you know there is a chance of your being hanged."

"I am your prisoner, true, but when the soldiers looked for me you led them to think I had escaped. Why did you do that?"

"You poor, simple boy! You talk about your ad-

ventures and some one who is not loyal to your side of the question overhears and reports to your enemies ; you are watched and followed. The papers are worth a good round sum in English money. I capture you and then you ask why I did not give you over to the soldiers so that they might get the reward. Don't you think you are very verdant?"

"I see it all. You want the reward all for yourself, but you have not got it yet."

"No, but I shall soon have it."

"How?"

"You are my prisoner."

"You have reminded me of **that** several times."

"You cannot deny it."

"Do not torture me. Tell me what you intend doing and let me face the worst."

"Give me the papers and you shall escape."

"What do you think me? I should be unworthy the name of American if I did as you suggest. I can die, but I will never live dishonored and dishonorable."

"Sounds very brave, but you will change your mind."

"Never!"

"I think you will. I have made up my mind to have those papers and I seldom fail when I set out to do anything."

"How long am I to be kept here?"

"Until you give me the papers."

"Then I shall die here, for I will not give anything intrusted to me. I will die before I will agree to such terms."

"Then you will have to die, for I am determined."

"So am I."

It occurred to me that I might adopt different tactics with greater success, so I hazarded the question :

"You are an American, are you not?"

"Why of course, what else could I be?"

"And yet you would assist the enemies of your native land?"

"What nonsense! It is you rebels who are the enemies; the English own the country."

"Just as you would own the papers you think I carry if you have them taken from me by force, or just as you hold me prisoner."

"I do not understand."

"America wants to be free, England uses force to prevent it being so. So America is a prisoner."

"Well?"

"England had no more right to the land of this country than you have to the papers which are mine. The Indians were partly driven off by the French and the English drove off the French, so it is only a question of might, not right."

"Hush! I will see you again."

Before I could move she had slipped through the panel and was singing away in the kitchen. Her singing was stopped by a gruff voice asking:

"Have you seen that young rebel who is carrying those papers to New York?"

"I am getting tired answering that question. Why should you ask me?"

"He was last seen here, but he escaped——"

"Oh, I remember now, it was very early this morning that I gave some milk to two boys. One went out to talk to my father, the other must have escaped through that window. Have you not caught them yet?"

"No."

"How funny! Why do you want them so badly?"

"Never mind why; we have orders to follow them to the ends of the earth——"

"This is not the end of the earth, and you are wasting time here instead of following them."

"Will you swear they are not here?"

"Let the right party ask me to take that oath and I will answer. I have no proof that you have a right to ask it."

The man uttered an oath and I heard him leave the room, then the girl gave a merry laugh and I knew she was dancing about the kitchen. A girl so light-hearted could not be altogether mercenary and I had hopes that she might soften and let me escape.

The fact that she had twice, at least, denied my presence to the English soldiers, and had stood between me and the use of force made me more contented to remain in my hiding place, miserable though it was.

Instinctively I knew it was getting dark; that night was coming on apace, and my work was no nearer being done than it was ten hours before.

I could not help it.

Finally I fell asleep.

I was awakened by feeling a hand on my shoulder.

I jumped up with a start and I know all the blood in my body wanted to get into my head.

My first thought was that the papers were stolen.

I had them wrapped round my body under my clothes and I felt, instinctively, to see if by any means they had been abstracted.

They were safe.

"What do you want?" I asked, hurriedly.

"Hush! Follow me, ask no questions and do not speak."

Again it was the young maiden who had come to me. I was her prisoner, and I realized that it was better to obey than to attempt resistance, at least until I got outside.

I was in the kitchen. Only a very dim light coming from a rush candle of the smallest kind illuminated the room, or it would be better to say made the darkness more palpable. The girl placed her finger on her lips and beckoned me to follow her.

She led the way up some narrow stairs and at the top opened a door. I followed and found myself in a small furnished room. It was lighted with a rush candle, but the smallness of the room made the light more clear. The girl locked the door and then motioned me to be seated.

"Are you going to give me the papers?"

"No."

"Is that your final answer?"

"It is."

"Don't you know that we can take them from you by force?"

"Don't you also know," I added, cruelly, "that I am strong enough to choke you to death and then liberate myself?"

"I know you could kill me, but you will not."

"Why?"

"Because your mother was a woman and you would never raise your hand against one of her sex."

"But if a woman unsexes herself, as you have **done** in taking me prisoner?"

"I am at your mercy, as you are at mine. I have been taught a lesson. I honor you. Act as you have done to-day all through your life and thousands will also honor and love you."

"You are a mystery."

"I have much to say to you; do not interrupt me. I am going to lock you in this room, you will rest better. The English soldiers are seeking you on the Newark road. Your safest plan would be, that is if you were free, to go back toward Elizabethtown. You are so well known that you could never escape even if you could get out. If you were a woman you could pass along the road unquestioned, but you are not. Don't look out of the window or you may be seen by the ones you would like to avoid. I may not see you again, but I shall often think of you, and I would like you to sometimes remember Mary Ellis. Try and get some sleep, for in the morning my father will take you in hand and he may be harsher than I have been."

She had been moving backward toward the door

while speaking and with the last words had opened the door and let herself out.

I heard the door locked and knew that it would be well guarded.

I wondered what all her speech meant, it was such a strange mixture.

In the morning her father would take the papers from me by force; that she had intimated.

In the morning—— Why should I wait until the morning?

I thought of the window and was waiting until it grew darker before I tried to open it and escape.

My eyes took in all the contents of the room and I saw some women's clothes thrown across a chair.

Instantly I remembered what she had said about the ease a woman would have in passing unnoticed, and I wondered if I could get into the petticoats.

I tried them on and found that they were a fair fit. They could not have belonged to Mary Ellis, for she was frail and short, while I was much stouter and taller.

Could she have placed them there purposely?

If so, was it part of a plot to capture me away from the house and thus shield her from suspicion?

I went down on my hands and knees and crawled to the window. I gradually raised my head so that I could look out without being seen.

Was it a mere coincidence that a clothesline was lying on the floor by the window?

No. I thanked Heaven for having softened the heart of Mary Ellis and induced her to give me a chance to escape.

No one was in sight.

I opened the window, which was not even fastened by the customary thumbscrew, and then I made one end of the rope fast to the heavy four-poster bed, and threw the other end out of the window.

It was as easy for me to slide down a rope as it was to walk downstairs, but my petticoats got tangled up round my legs and I found my task a difficult one.

I could not help wondering how girls managed to walk and run, as I had seen some do, in their awkward clothes. I know I could not get my feet free, and I

hung suspended in the air, my knees clutching the rope, but my clothes effectually proving a barrier to sliding.

After a moment I swung myself free from the rope, trusting to my hands alone, then I got along better, and very soon was on the ground.

CHAPTER IX.

PURSUED !

I tried to remember which way she had advised me to take. The Newark road she said was held by the English soldiers, so that would not be safe. What did she mean by saying that it would be better to go back toward Elizabethtown?

When I had gone some distance from the house I sat down to think.

Perhaps it would be safer to retrace my steps some distance and take a road which I knew ran along the side of Newark Bay, but then how was I to get across the bay?

That I must think out, and my brain was getting fairly muddled.

I got up and walked rapidly in the direction of the bay, when just as I was feeling proud of myself I stepped on the front of my dress and my nose came in contact with the ground, which seemed exceedingly hard just there.

I was sure the skin was off my nose and perhaps my face as well, but that was a minor consideration.

I tried to get up, but when I pulled the petticoat free from my toes and tried to rise my heel got on the back and pulled me down again.

If I were a woman I would try and invent some other kind of clothes, for these were an abomination.

After considerable work I stood upright, then I pulled up the petticoats and gathered them round my waist, so that my legs, encased in homespun breeches, should have free play.

I walked as fast as I could and was close to the bay when I saw some one ahead of me. I instantly dropped the petticoats and ambled along. The one in front was in no hurry and I could not help overtaking him.

I caught up to him and was passing, when I suddenly felt that I recognized the figure.

I looked round and then put my hand on his shoulder. He shook me off and told me to go home.

"Don't you know me?" I cried.

"Amos?"

"Yes, Ted; it is Amos."

"I have been waiting for you these three hours," he said.

"Waiting for me?"

"Yes, and when I saw you I was so mad, thinking that you were a woman, that I was positively rude."

"Why?"

"Because we are close to the water and I heard that a woman was to be rowed across the bay, and I was asked if I could do it. I thought you were the woman."

"So I am."

"Tush! There was a woman, really, but I wanted the boat to take you across, and I was afraid the woman was going to get here first."

When I had a good talk with Ted in the boat, which he had pulled out into the bay far beyond gunshot, I found that he had been kept a prisoner in the barn and liberated, or rather allowed to escape on condition that he rowed this woman across the bay.

We discussed the matter from all sides and at last came to the conclusion that the Ellis family was really

a patriotic one and only arrested us as a bluff, holding us until the soldiers were put off the scent and then our escape was planned with remarkable cunning.

Of course I was the woman Ted was to row across, and I was given the means of escape, while the Ellis family could still make a bluff of having tried to secure the papers I carried.

"Can we pull across the bay?" I asked.

"What do you take me for? I can pull ten miles without a rest, and you can't equal that or I'm mistaken."

"Not in these clothes."

"Bother the clothes; throw them overboard."

"They might be useful on the other side."

"Right you are. But tell me your adventures."

"Tell me yours."

"I hadn't any. I was lured into a barn and when I tried to get out I found that it was secured. I was kept there all day, and, as I told you, only liberated on the promise that I would row a woman across the bay, and even then the old farmer declared that he ex-

pected the boat would go to the bottom, and added that he would not be sorry to hear of it."

"Where was this mysterious woman going?"

"To Capt. Kidd's Island."

"Where is that?"

"In New York Bay, halfway between New York and Staten Island; it belongs now to a man named Bedloe, and is garrisoned by the Americans."

"I understand; if we can reach there we shall be safe."

"Yes, and a way will be found for us to reach the mainland and you can deliver your message."

"Mary Ellis is a wonderful girl."

"So is her father."

"What? Is he a girl?"

"You know what I mean. He was all the time telling me that I should be shot as soon as the soldiers came. He kept up the game of bluff well."

"You are right. I shall not fail to tell the general of them. Let me take the oars now."

"With pleasure; I am tired."

I did not stop to take off my feminine attire, but

took the oars and began to pull with all the vigor of youth. I never spoke a word, but bent to my work determined to show Ted that a Jerseyman was as good at the oars as a New Englander.

"Is that a boat coming toward us?" Ted asked, excitedly.

"Where?"

"To the left."

"Yes, and it is a man-of-war boat," I answered, resting a moment.

"Enemy, then."

"Do you think so?"

"Sure."

"What can we do, we have no guns."

"Pull for your life. Stay! Give me one oar and together we can make the boat skim the water."

"Quick, or we shall be too late!"

We were near enough to see that it was really an English boat which was following us, and as it was manned by four men, who plied the oars with tremendous strength, our chance of escape seemed very slight.

"There is the island, let us pull toward it; we may be able to get protection from the guns."

We worked harder than we had ever done before in our lives, and for a time I thought that we had lengthened the distance between us, but I soon saw that the enemy was going to try and intercept us.

"Are you sure that island is in the possession of our forces?"

"It was a week ago."

"I should not think the enemy would want to get too near, then."

"I do not understand it."

We were nearing the island and could see the American flag floating above the fort; the sight gave us renewed courage.

"If we only had a flag as a signal," I said.

"We haven't, so must do the best we can without."

"Give me your oar and you try and signal."

I took both oars and Ted waved his coat frantically, but there was no response.

A gun was fired from the boat and the bullet fell with a splash in the water not twenty feet away.

"Another will be nearer."

"Yes, but another may attract the attention of the garrison and we may be saved."

Another shot was fired and I fell over in the boat. I was not struck, but my oar was, and the shock keeled me over.

Ted got hold of the other oar and, standing at the stern, punted along, but it was very little use, for the enemy was gaining on us.

"Surrender!" came across the water.

"To whom?" I shouted back in return.

"Your king," was the answer.

"We are citizens of a free republic," I yelled at the top of my voice, hoping that it might be heard by the sentries on the island.

"Then you must die if you will not surrender."

The boat was now only a few yards away and we could both have been killed instantly, but it was evident that our death was not wanted. I thought of the papers and was glad that they were covered with some oilskin and would stand a certain amount of water without injury.

Ted looked at the boat and then whispered to me:

"Can you swim?"

"Like a fish."

"Good! So can I. Wait and I will surprise them. Make for the shore as quickly as possible when you are in the water."

He had allowed the enemy's boat to get close to us and it looked as though we were about to surrender.

When within three or four feet Ted gave a leap out of the boat and landed on the rail of the other, causing it to capsize and throw its occupants into the water.

Ted caught hold of one of the seamen and grappled with him and by this maneuver got between the men and the boat, thus preventing them righting it.

There was quite a struggle in the water, but I did not wait to see how it ended, for I had precious papers to save and so I was striking out for the shore.

"Where away?"

The question came from the island, and I shouted back:

"I am an American—a Boy of Liberty—save me!"

A boat was quickly unfastened from its moorings

and a stalwart soldier jumped into it and pulled toward me.

In a few minutes I was in the boat, tired and almost exhausted, but I had presence of mind enough to ask if it would be possible to save Ted.

"How many are there of the foe?"

"Four."

"I only see four altogether."

"That man with the short hair is my friend; he is Ted Billington."

"Ted, by all that's great! I am Josiah; perhaps you don't know me, but he does. I'll save him even if I have to smash a few heads."

All the time he was talking he was pulling with far more systematic strokes than we had used, for as I learned he had been a ferryman in Boston harbor and had enlisted in the American army after the evacuation of that town by the British.

We were now close to the struggling men and Josiah took in the situation at a glance. He stood up and, raising his oar, brought it down on the head of one

Englishman with such force that the man sank like a stone.

Another blow disabled the second, and then Josiah shouted :

“Ted, my boy, strike out and let me have a go at that thick skull.”

Ted obeyed and reached the boat while Josiah was waging a very one-sided duel with the third seaman.

When he was through he sat down in the boat and, spitting on his hands, caught hold of the oars and pulled toward the shore as calmly as though nothing had occurred.

“What brought you to Bedloe’s Island?” Ted asked.

“My boy, I ought to be the one to ask that question, but I refrain because I am so glad to see you.”

“What became of the fourth man?” I asked.

“I think I choked him, am not sure, but I felt him slip out of my hands and I saw him no more.

When we were landed on the island explanations were in order. The American garrison had no idea that any of the enemy had boats on the Jersey side, for they did not know that while we were at the Ellis farmhouse

a gunboat had sailed through the Kill and was stationed at the entrance of Newark Bay.

It was from this gunboat that the boat was manned and sent in our pursuit.

I asked to be taken to the commandant of the fort, as I had important news to communicate.

To my great joy I found that Gen. Israel Putnam was with the commandant, and so I was actually in the presence of Washington's favored friend and general.

I told my story and asked for a chance to get the papers, for I feared they might be wet and the longer they stayed in that condition the more likely they were to become valueless.

I found that the oiled skin had preserved them fairly well, and I had no hesitation in giving them to Gen. Putnam.

"You will have to take them to Gen. Washington yourself," he said, smiling with that peculiar smile which so charmed those with whom he had dealings.

"May I ask how I am to reach the great general?"

"I am returning at once, and you can accompany me."

"And Ted—I mean Ensign Billington?"

"Is he here?"

"Yes; he was my companion."

"If you had searched the whole country you could not have selected a better."

"I am sure of that, but he was not my selection, but was sent by Col. Herd, acting for Gen. Charles Lee."

CHAPTER X.

A MARINE SPECTACLE AND A BIT OF HISTORY.

It was about three miles from the island to New York and the general had a good, strong boat and an equally stalwart crew.

The boat was well filled, but as Putnam said, there was always room for more, so we crowded in and four men on each side bent to the oars. Even a big boat like that, with its little four-pound cannon at the bow and its stack of guns and ammunition, appeared like a shell on the water when eight oars dipped the surface and feathered so lightly.

"Go with the tide, boys," Putnam said, and the men were not unwilling, for the current was strong.

Israel Putnam, a landsman, farmer, war veteran, was yet at home on the water. He stood in the center of the boat, his arms crossed over his chest most of the time, looking up and down the bay as sharply as any marine lookout.

"Go easy, boys; we may have to turn back," he exclaimed, though with great calmness.

We had a good view of the Narrows, and I thought I had never seen a more glorious sight in my life. The sun's rays were dancing on the water and the little white caps looked like so many waves of sparkling silver. But it was not the water which attracted the attention of the general.

Coming through the Narrows was a great fleet of war ships, and he knew that England had sent its strong fleet with Lord Howe, as admiral, to help the land forces in subduing the Americans.

Gen. William Howe with his army evacuated Boston on March 17, and falling back to Halifax awaited for a time the fleet which, under the command of his brother, the distinguished admiral, was bringing reinforcements from England. But becoming impatient of delay, he sailed from that place for New York on the twelfth of June, arriving off Sandy Hook on the twenty-fifth.

Admiral Lord Howe reached Halifax soon after his brother had departed, and finding that the expected

seat of war would be New York, he set sail and reached the Narrows on the twelfth of July.

I have told how Sir William Howe had effected a landing on Staten Island and been received with a certain amount of friendliness. Gen. Howe had made his headquarters at New Dorp, and in the plan of campaign which I had secured he set forth that it was to ascend the North River and attack the city from that river.

As we looked on the vast array of boats, numbering one hundred and thirteen sail, enter the bay through the Narrows, there was a fascination hard to resist.

"It is a grand sight!" Putnam exclaimed, and everyone of us could only echo:

"It is."

As the *Asia* was entering the Narrows a shot was fired from a small fort on the Long Island shore. This shot was answered by about forty twenty-four-pounders, on the war ships.

We had no time to waste, though we watched the marine spectacle as long as we dared, and only wished that the combat had been more equal.

Gen. Putnam ordered the boatmen to pull into the New York side and get near enough to be within the protection of our own guns.

Then we again rested and saw one grand line of war ships come to anchor, reaching from the entrance to the Kills right out to the Narrows.

We watched the admiral's flag run up and then we heard the thunder of the guns in salute.

A boat was lowered and Lord Howe was pulled to the Staten Island shore, to join his brother.

From Minne Berger, who managed to retain his liberty on Staten Island without once being suspected of being a sympathizer with the Americans, I learned that as soon as the news reached Gen. Howe that his brother was approaching the Narrows, he sent a battalion of grenadiers into Richmond, where the court was in session, the judge, Benjamin Seaman, being an arden royalist. The judge ordered the sheriff, Thomas Frost, to be ready to officially welcome his majesty's troops to the county seat.

"Your honor," said the sheriff, "in all court matters I will obey your orders, but in this matter I respectfully

refuse, for I am an American and my people have declared their independence, and with them I refuse to recognize either the king or his army."

There was consternation in that quiet little village, and the judge ordered the sheriff into custody as a rebellious person in contempt of the court.

Who was to take the sheriff into custody? The constables would not and the judge had no authority to order the soldiers to do so, but Capt. Gregory, of the Grenadiers, constituted himself an authority and ordered the men to arrest Thomas Frost. Instantly a hundred or more citizens, who admired the sheriff, even though they might not agree with him politically, stepped between the soldiers and their intended prisoner and declared that if anyone tried to take the sheriff it would be the signal for war.

"Take him!" cried Abraham Jones, "but if you do it will be over our dead bodies!"

Judge Seaman was too shrewd to provoke an outbreak just then, so he ordered the sheriff to hold himself in readiness to answer in court when called upon.

All this I learned some months later, but as I am

telling the story of those days I thought my friends would like to know what had transpired at that time, so that is my excuse for giving some little facts of history.

We landed in New York near the Bowling Green, and I was close to Gen. Putnam when he was told, it may have been for the twentieth time, how the populace had swept all before them and hurried to the Bowling Green where stood a leaden statue of King George.

Wildly excited the people tore the statue from its pedestal and trampled upon it, battering it out of all resemblance to man.

"Throw it in the water!" cried an excited citizen.

Scores of willing hands were ready to carry this order into effect and the statue might have been found by future generations at the bottom of the bay, had not a Quaker stepped into the midst of the crowd and with his accustomed calmness asked for silence.

"Friends, why act like that? Hast thou no wit? Dost thou think the king whom that mass of metal is supposed to represent, cares whether it stands on a pedestal or lies in the water?"

“Friends, that statue is made of good lead; it may be that evil-minded men may think of war, and may try to make thee all fight or live as slaves. Dost thou not know that lead makes good bullets? I am a man of peace myself, but the carnal-minded fight and it does not hurt my peaceful principles to tell thee that King George’s statue cast into good bullets would help thy cause more than if thou throwest it into the water.”

The Quaker’s suggestion was a good one and many an English and Hessian soldier met his death by means of a bullet cast from that very statue.

The excuse for telling the general this story again was that the people had again gathered at the Bowling Green in great force to erect a liberty pole, and that Gen. Washington was expected from Fraunce’s Tavern, his headquarters, shortly, to see the pole erected and the American flag run up to its top.

While yet the man was speaking we heard a mighty shout, like unto a roar. Nay, it seemed to me more like the roll of thunder, though only made by human voices. I had never heard the like before and I trem-

bled, for I thought the English must have landed and were driving all before them.

Ted turned pale, then looked up at the rugged face of Israel Putnam and saw upon it a smile which reassured him.

"It is all right, Amos Mersereau," he said; "it is only the people cheering their leader."

"Are you sure of that, Ted?"

"Ay, verily," he said, falling into the Puritan language of his ancestors.

Through a narrow street, lined by the residences of the most wealthy merchants of the city, rode Gen. Washington, with a small staff, but accompanied by a thousand people at least, and each of that thousand was trying how loud he could shout the praises of the great man who was the leader of a people struggling to be free.

Ted nudged me and asked:

"What dost thou think now?"

I could not speak, my heart was in my throat; I felt that I should choke.

As Washington drew near I tried to cheer, but a great sob burst from me and I found the tears flowing down from my eyes. I was ashamed. I, a Boy of Liberty, to cry in the street! What would my future comrades think if they knew? I looked round and what a sight I saw! Women were holding up their little ones so that they might get a glimpse of Washington; young girls were pushing forward, some of them even getting their heads between the bodies of strong men so that they might also see his face; young men trying to control their emotion and many not succeeding any better than I in keeping back their tears; old men, with beards which made them look like patriarchs, were eager to look upon the man they believed would be their deliverer, even though they might not live to see the republic firmly established.

Such was the crowd which surrounded the liberator on that eventful day.

"I thank you, fellow citizens. Let your cheers be not for a man, but for the cause," said Washington, as he bowed his acknowledgments to that crowd.

There was not much speech making, but what was said was to the point.

It was the opening of a new world to me.

I might have been blundering Amos, always in the way up to that time, but at that moment I felt I was a man, and I vowed I would do man's work in my country's service.

The pole rose in the air and again the cheers broke out, then when it was firmly planted and able to withstand the strongest wind, a man stepped forward and began to climb it.

The flag was to be nailed to the pole, for those who had organized the movement had made a solemn vow that it should never be lowered by American hands until Washington himself so ordered.

When the flag was securely fastened to the pole, the general wheeled his horse round and started back to Fraunce's Tavern, followed by his personal staff.

"Come, boys, we will walk leisurely after him," Gen. Putnam said, as he caught hold of both Ted and myself.

"Shall I speak to him?" I asked Ted.

"Speak? Why, of course! He is the greatest man that ever lived, but he will talk to you just as I would."

I could scarcely think it possible. Would he tell me that I was in the way? Would he push me away with some insulting remark? No, I knew he would not, for he was a king among men.

CHAPTER XI.

IN THE "BOUERIE."

Gen. Israel Putnam walked rapidly through the narrow street, neither looking to the right nor to the left, until he reached Fraunce's Tavern.

A rude sign proclaimed the name of the house, though the paint was hardly dry, and plainly showed some other designation beneath it.

As I stood waiting for permission to enter, I was told that "Black Sam" Fraunce, as he was called on account of his dark complexion, had bought the house in 1762 and had opened a tavern with the sign of "The Queen's Head," in honor of "Good Queen Charlotte," but when the colonies declared their independence he, with his own hand, painted over the portrait of the queen and inscribed the new name of "Fraunce's Tavern."

When Washington entered New York, Fraunce at once offered the tavern for headquarters, and the offer was accepted temporarily.

I stood waiting at the foot of the broad stairs with many others for a few minutes and then I heard a voice call:

"Amos Mersereau."

I looked up and saw one of the nicest faces I had ever looked upon.

"Are you Amos Mersereau?" he asked, and when I answered in the affirmative he called me up the stairs.

"I am Capt. Winthrop Tempest," he said, "and I want to thank you for what you have done. I am on the staff of Gen. Washington and have thus had the opportunity of listening to your praises sung by an old veteran."

"I have tried to do my duty," I answered.

"Duty! Why man, if everyone did as much as you have, the Republic would be at peace with all the world at once."

"Am I to see Gen. Washington?"

"That is why I am here. Follow me."

He led the way into a large room, lighted by seven windows, and I thought that all the sunshine in God's

world could not be too much to shine on the faces of those men gathered there.

Winthrop made his way to the end of the room and pulled me by the coat sleeve, or I should never have dared to follow.

"This is Amos Mersereau, your excellency," he said, and the general leaned forward and grasped my hand, pulling me to a place by his side.

"Amos, I am glad to see you; Gen. Putnam has told me of the wonderful work you have done. I want to hear the story from your own lips."

"There is nothing to tell, sir. I got some papers which Col. Herd said you ought to have, and here they are."

"No no; that will never do. Give me the papers."

I handed them to him and he passed them over to Tempest, with the order to have them examined, then he turned to me and in a kindly voice said:

"My boy, I want to know every detail, from the time you crossed over to Staten Island to the very moment you landed on Bedloe's Island after the fight with four of his majesty's soldiers."

"But, your excellency, I did not fight. It was Ted—I beg pardon—Ensign Billington, who did the fighting."

"So Ted was with you." He looked toward the end of the room and his eyes rested on a tall young fellow who was keeping in the background.

"Come here you two Boys of Liberty—yes, I mean you, Lieut. Abram Billington and you, Ensign Pierce."

The two went to the front and I was then introduced to "Dashing Abe" and the brave Benjamin Pierce.

"I called you, because Ensign Ted was with this young hero and I thought you ought to know the company your brother keeps."

I was surprised to hear Washington speak so freely but I learned later that it was the only relaxation he allowed himself.

I had to tell my story, which did not take long, for it seemed so trivial, and when I came to the peculiar adventure at the house of Mary Ellis, I hesitated whether I should mention the time I was kept in the dark vault, but my mind was set at rest by Tempest, who said that Ted had told the story, and Mary Ellis

was to be considered a true heroine for her conduct in the matter.

"Are you in any regiment?" Tempest asked.

"No, save a promise to Ensign Billington that I would join the Boys of Liberty."

"I am glad of it; I have a great liking for the Boys of Liberty and shall keep them pretty near me to the end of the struggle."

The interview was over and I left Fraunce's Tavern feeling proud to have been even in the presence of the great general.

Ted, who had remained in the background, found me out and suggested that we should find our way about the city.

It was all new to me, the fine houses of the De Puysters, Van Cortlandts and other merchants and gentry were so much grander than anything I had seen, that my breath was fairly taken away.

We went into the Bouerie and strutted along as proud as peacocks, for we both wore short swords and imagined that everyone was looking at us.

Ted seized my arm and whispered:

"Listen; what do you hear?"

"Sounds like a quarrel."

"Yes; come along, we will see what it is."

We turned into a side street where the houses were of a smaller and less pretentious style, and saw a number of men standing round a boy who was crying with pain.

We pushed into the midst of the throng and asked the boy what was the cause of his grief.

"They beat me, they did."

"What for?"

"You mind your own business, you young fools; better skip to your own homes," one of the crowd shouted to us as we tried to get by the side of the boy.

"I helped pull down the king's statue," the boy said between his sobs.

"And you have been beaten for that?"

"Yes; I am not a king's boy."

"I am glad to hear it," Ted said, earnestly, and then, turning to the men, he asked them by what right they assaulted a boy in the streets.

"We are king's men, and this knave is a rebel," exclaimed one who appeared to be the ringleader.

"How can that be? It is you who are rebels. Know you not that this is a republic and the king's men are the only rebels now. Get you home or I will call the soldiers and have you all arrested."

"Ha! ha! ha! Hark to the young whipper-snapper! He calls the soldiers; perhaps he is one himself!"

"Are you going home?"

"We shall please ourselves about that."

"Draw, Amos, and let us teach these fellows a lesson!"

We drew our swords and made for the men, who were cowards, every one, and began to run as soon as they saw the bright blades of our swords.

We followed them some distance, and only brought up when we met a company of Boys of Liberty, to whom had been assigned the task of patrolling the streets.

"These men were beating a poor boy because he took part in the destruction of the old statue," I said, and Ted added:

"I am Ensign Billington, of whom you may have heard, and I give these rebels and rioters into your hands."

Then the ringleader of the rioters fell on his knees and cried out:

"Mercy! mercy! We meant no harm; we did not hurt him; we only wanted to frighten him and for that we are sorry."

"What mercy can you expect? You were ill-treating a poor boy, who only did what others were doing!"

"Mercy, good soldiers——"

"Get up, you coward; and the English are welcome to you, we do not want such creatures."

The men were glad enough to get their freedom, and we laughed heartily at the way they scooted out of sight.

Ted and I had orders to report to the colonel of the Boys of Liberty that evening for further instructions, and we made our way for Fraunce's Tavern and reached there in time for mess.

I was given a seat of honor, though why I did not know, but they all seemed to think that I was worthy

of distinction, and I could only accept with the understanding that it was my resolve to make myself worthy of their esteem.

As guest with us at the mess table was Capt. Winthrop Tempest, whose career I had heard about that day, for he was looked up to as being one of the most daring soldiers of the republic and had been with the men who fired the "first shots for liberty."

He told us that Lord Howe had sent a special officer from Staten Island that afternoon with a letter addressed to "George Washington, Esq."

When the general looked at the superscription he handed it back to the officer, saying:

"Tell Lord Howe that I am the commander of the American forces and cannot receive any private letter from him."

"It is on public business, sir," the English officer replied.

"Then all the more reason why I should refuse to break the seal. I am commander and as such must be addressed."

The officer departed with the letter and as we were

at mess returned, this time, as I afterwards heard, with a letter addressed "George Washington, etc., etc., etc.,"

"What means this fresh insult?" the general asked; "what means 'etc., etc., etc.'?"

The officer, who was Howe's adjutant-general, answered that the Latin abbreviations could be translated, "general of the American forces," but Washington was not going to be caught in a trap like that and so again he dismissed the officer.

We were cautioned to move quietly about the city and not to provoke any quarrels, though we had the right to defend ourselves if attacked.

So, with three of the Boys of Liberty, I went out into Montgomerie's ward, in order to see what that part of the city looked like in the evening. We had our swords, which were quite necessary for our protection, for the Tories were not averse to rioting and even murder.

We had not been out long before a gang of young ruffians, arm-in-arm, tried to intercept us and prevent us walking along the street.

"Had we not better turn back?" I asked, for I had no desire to have a street fight on my hands.

"If we do we shall be stoned," Ted replied.

"In that case we could turn and drive them back."

"All right; right about face!"

We turned and began to walk in the direction from whence we had come, when Ted's surmise was correct, for a stone whistled past my ear and I only escaped being hit by a hair's breadth.

Another stone followed, then several others, but up to that time we had not been struck. One better aimed, perhaps, hit Ted on the shoulder and made him wince with pain.

"Shall we turn now?" I asked, and the others did not wait for consent, but all turned simultaneously and drew their swords.

To our surprise the young ruffians did not start to run, but fired another volley of stones at us, and then two of them drew pistols, which their long coats had hidden.

"Make a dash for it," Ted ordered, and we did.

I had never struck a man before with a sharp steel

sword, and it seemed horrible to do it then, but our lives depended upon it and I laid about me to the right and left, not caring whether I killed my opponents or not.

I saw after the fight had lasted two or three minutes that my companions had used the flat of their swords, and I turned mine then, but not until I saw that there were several little pools of blood on the road.

I believe the fight would have continued until some were killed had not the patrol marched up and arrested us all. In vain we explained that we had been assaulted. The orders were explicit against fighting in the street, and defending ourselves did not mean engaging in a regular pitched battle.

That night we all, Americans and Tories, slept in the military prison at the corner of Pearl Street. I felt very small as I thought that my first night in New York should be spent in prison, and I wondered what our punishment might be.

The sun had not risen more than an hour, when the summons came for us all to have breakfast.

I found myself sitting by a young Tory whose head

was bandaged all over, leaving scarcely room for his eyes and mouth.

"I admire your bravery," he said; "we were in the wrong, but we had no idea you would fight."

"We thought you would run when we drew our swords."

"Did you? Well, let me tell you that I was born in the Bouerie, and a Bouerie boy never flinches."

"I was born in Jersey."

"Oh!"

There was a perceptible sneer in his ejaculation and I learned later that the New Yorkers looked upon New Jersey almost in the light of being a foreign country.

"I cannot see why you want England to rule over this nation," I remarked when the breakfast was nearly over.

"To tell the truth, I do not care who rules, I was out for a fight and I got one. Ten to one if you had been Tories I should have shouted for the other side."

"Why don't you join the Boys of Liberty?"

"They wouldn't have me."

"I think they would be glad of you, only you must be a patriot and not a mere fighter, or you might fight on the wrong side."

When breakfast was over, our names were called and as each answered he was shown the door and went out free. It was a strange thing, so it appeared to me, for the night in the prison was really no punishment, but when I asked an officer about it he laughed and replied that it was not intended as a punishment only, but to give our blood a chance to cool.

CHAPTER XII.

S P I E S.

For a month we stayed in New York almost inactive. Lord Howe had asked permission to inform the people that England was ready to pardon any who would ask forgiveness for being in rebellion, but Washington declared that as the Americans had done nothing but what was praiseworthy and right, there was nothing to forgive, and he demanded that Lord Howe should ask pardon for invading the soil of the new republic.

I also found out that my work had been successful, for the British had abandoned all thought of invading the city by way of the North River, according to the plan of campaign which I had obtained.

This gave the Americans time to drill and get into good military condition, for, Washington's army consisted mostly of very raw recruits, while against him were pitted the very flower of the English army, trained soldiers, splendid cavalrymen and expert artil-

lerists, men who were inured to every danger and who made a business of fighting.

Not to be outdone in courtesy, Gen. Washington sent an officer over to Staten Island to inform Lord Howe that the colonies no longer esteemed Great Britain as their superior, that they had cast off all allegiance and had declared their independence, and that unless Lord Howe withdrew it would be the painful duty of the new republic to declare war on the invaders and drive them out.

Lord Howe received the officer and listened patiently to the message, to which he replied that, as Great Britain did not recognize the right of the colonies to withdraw their allegiance, he must hold all in arms against lawful authority to be rebels, and if taken with arms in their hands they would be dealt with, not as legitimate belligerents, but as assassins, and no mercy would be shown.

No more encouraging message could have been sent to the Americans, who were beginning to feel that the struggle was hopeless, for, instead of disheartening them further, it made them feel that they were fighting

for very life, and that the English had grossly insulted them.

I was standing near the water, looking over the bay at the Staten Island shore, and wondering whether the next struggle would be on the island or in the city, when I felt a hand drop on my shoulder rather heavier than was pleasant.

I shook myself free and was about to resent the familiarity, when a voice which seemed very well known said, in a strong whisper :

“Amos Mersereau, where can I speak with you in private?”

I looked at the man and did not recognize him; he was muffled up so that his face was not visible, and I did not know him from Adam.

“Who are you?”

“Don’t you know me?”

“No.”

“Amos, Amos, I could weep over such forgetfulness.”

There was something in the accent which caused me to ejaculate :

"Minne Berger!"

"That is what I was once called, but I am not called so now."

"What do you want with me?"

"I have news—news which Washington ought to know. I have only a few minutes in which I can call myself free and I must not be seen talking to an American."

"But you——"

"Hush! I am supposed to be friendly with the British just now, and I have rowed a man across who is a spy."

I led the way to a shed, behind which we could hide for a few moments and yet keep an eye on the road leading to it. Then I said:

"I trust you, Minne Berger, for I know your heart is right, but if you misled me, I would kill you as I would any spy I captured."

"Keep all your grand speeches, and listen to me. Do you think I like the job of bringing a spy into your midst? I am as good an American as you, Amos

Mersereau, and it was only that I might communicate with some of you that I undertook the job."

"Where is the spy?"

"Hush, you waste time. Not one word will I tell you if you attempt to capture him; my information is worth that much, and as for the spy, leave him to me; he may never land on Staten Island again. Swear that you will not betray me."

"All right, Berger, I can trust you."

"Well, then, Lord Howe and his brother are going to commence an attack on you at once——"

"Here?"

"No. The forces are to land on the southwestern coast of Long Island and then advance on Brooklyn by three roads. Gen. Grant will go by the way of the Narrows; the second division under Gen. Heister, consisting of Hessians, will proceed to Flatbush, and thence by Bedford to Brooklyn, while the third division, which will be the strongest, will be led by Lord Cornwallis and Gen. Clinton and by way of the Jamaica road pass through Bedford and get to the rear of

Gen. Stirling's army. This much I have learned and thought it might be useful to know."

"Thanks, Berger, you have rendered us good service, I——"

"Will you?"

Before I had time to turn I was grappled round the throat by a pair of strong arms and the life nearly choked out of me, while another pair of arms did the like thing for Berger.

We could not call out, neither could we make any resistance, but powerless as we were, we were dragged down to the water's edge and almost thrown into a big flat-bottomed boat.

If Berger had been free, I should have thought that he had betrayed me, but why, I could not imagine, as I was of very little importance, but he was treated worse than I, for I saw that he was bound hand and foot and his mouth closed with a gag.

My hands were left free for a time, but not long enough for me to make a dash for liberty. I was bound tightly and also gagged.

My feet were left free, for which I was thankful,

for when one of my captors stood up to push off the boat, I slid one foot between his legs and with a sudden jerk overbalanced him and caused him to fall into the water. Then I leaped to the bank and ran a few yards, hoping that I might see some of my own people, or that I might get far enough away from the water to escape, for it was a strange thing that our picket line did not extend nearer the water than Bowling Green, and there was quite a considerable space of low land, often covered with water, I admit, between that point and where boats anchored.

Not looking where I was going, I missed my footing and fell headlong in a puddle of water which made me gasp for breath as my head went right in and stuck in the mud.

I must have looked a sorry object when I got out, but I had not much chance of worrying, for I was seized around the waist and knew that I was again a prisoner.

Fortunately the gag slipped from my mouth and I shouted with all my might for help.

Instantly an answering call came from the pickets

and my captor started back to the water, leaving me half dead from a terrific blow he had dealt me as a parting gift.

I could only point to the water and murmur the one word:

“Spies!”

Then I became unconscious and my mind is a blank as to what transpired during the next five days.

Then I heard that I had been raving and had told the story pretty accurately—as I had heard it from Berger—to Ted, who was my nurse and faithful attendant, never leaving me, night or day.

When I became conscious, he repeated what I had said and asked me if there was any foundation for the story. I repeated to him all I knew, but he begged of me not to tire myself, as I would have to tell some officer.

Soon I found Winthrop Tempest by my bedside and to him I again told the story.

“You think this man Berger can be trusted?”

“I am sure of it.”

"You believe, then, that he had only our interests at heart when he rowed the spies over to New York?"

"I can vouch for him as I can for myself."

"I am glad of it, for not one word will he speak in his own defense."

"Is he here?"

"Yes; we captured him and two men who were in the boat, one of whom was very wet, the other, the one who nearly killed you."

"What have you done with them?"

"They are locked up; I would hang them at once, but the commander is soft-hearted and does not want to take life except on the field of battle."

"Does he know what I have heard and evidently told in my suffering?"

"No, we thought it was only delirium, but in an hour all will be known to him."

In an hour, would that be too late? Perhaps the British had already reached Long Island and surrounded the little army of Generals Stirling and Sullivan.

While I lay wondering about this, the door opened and Washington himself entered, and once again I had to tell the story and also all I knew about Minne Berger, the devoted Staten Islander, who had so well served the new republic.

"My boy, once more we are indebted to you, and I shall mention your name to Congress in my next report."

It was three days later before I was deemed well enough to join my company of Boys of Liberty, and then I was hailed as a hero, though again I could not understand why.

"We are ordered to march to-morrow," Ted told me.

"Where to?"

"Long Island; we are to try and reach Gen. Sullivan, who is at the head of our main army there."

"I am very glad, I long for some fighting."

"You will get enough of it, never fear."

"Is Gen. Washington going over to take command?"

"Not at first; Putnam has been placed in command

over there, and he is a natural-born fighter, and a good general."

"Who is in command of our regiment?"

"Haven't you heard?"

"Not a word."

"Well, the Boys of Liberty will be under the command of Col. Billington, my father; but our company will have Capt. Gerald Bailey, and he is a fighter from way back."

"Is that the Bailey of whom you have told me?"

"Yes, he was with Dashing Abe in his Canadian fight."

"And that other brave Boy of Liberty, Pierce?"

"He is in another company; we are not all attached to this one division. I want to tell you a secret, Amos. The Boys of Liberty are told off wherever they may do the most good; you see we will do things older men would hesitate to perform."

"When do we start?"

"In the morning. Get what rest you can to-night, we may never sleep in a bed again, for we shall have to face the music before long, and many of us will have

a few inches of earth as our coverlet before many days are over."

"You are despondent."

"No, but I know what the British are as fighters. Good-night."

CHAPTER XIII.

DISASTER.

Boom—boom!

Louder, deadlier than ever came the sound of the British artillery.

Puffs of white smoke rose above the trees, and went floating across the plain, enveloping the village of Bedford in its dreadful embrace.

Never had I heard such a roar, and I confess I trembled as I listened.

To my inexperienced mind it seemed as though we were standing as targets to be shot down by an unseen foe.

Gen. Sullivan rode along the lines giving his orders here, there and everywhere, sending this regiment to one place and that to another, but not a shot was fired.

War had opened in earnest.

Gen. Howe had fulfilled his promise, and had invaded Long Island.

We were no match for the enemy, our artillery was of the most primitive kind, we had but few guns, and those of an antiquated pattern. Our gunners were good men and able marksmen, but they had to see the foe before they could do effective work; they could not afford to throw away ammunition.

Our cavalry consisted of a number of farmers mounted on farm horses unaccustomed to the clang and clatter, the noise and bluster of war.

Against us we had the Hessians, hireling soldiers, who made killing their trade, and who had gone into the army from pure love of the horrors of war. Then there were the crack cavalry regiments of England, mounted on superb war horses, horses as intelligent as their riders. The artillery corps was an efficient one, the guns of the latest pattern, the ammunition plentiful.

What chance had we against such a foe?

The artillery opened along the whole line, engaging our main army; the columns of Hessians moved steadily forward, and we saw that Gen. Heister was in earnest.

Gen. Sullivan ordered us to move forward and meet

the enemy, an order which roused us to the greatest enthusiasm.

There was a grand advance along the whole line.

I knew not what others were doing, for soon we had all we could attend to in our own ranks.

Col. Billington, mounted on a good horse, which had borne him safely through several engagements, gave the order to the Boys of Liberty :

“Forward, boys !”

With drawn sword, Col. Billington rode at the front.

The Hessians’ guns and temporary earthworks were now in view.

“Follow me, boys !” shouted Billington.

Almost at the same moment his horse reeled and plunged to the ground.

Billington was unhurt.

He rose to his feet, and led us forward into the roaring vortex of the battle.

I do not know what we did, it was all like a dream at first. I know we loaded and fired as rapidly as was possible. I remember one big Hessian closing in upon

me and trying to wrench the gun from my hands. I have an idea that I threw him off and dashed out his brains with the butt of my gun.

Men fell on every hand, brave soldiers of the republic, yet not a soul faltered; we did not seem to notice those who had fallen, but dashed forward intermingling with the enemy, and fighting like savages.

Death shots fell thick and fast.

We knew we were outnumbered, we realized that we had no chance.

Then it was that a regiment of Continentals, which had been far in advance, fled in disorder on our right.

Guns, knapsacks, everything portable was thrown away, and a grand panic was inevitable.

Col. Billington saw the effect on our brave boys, and though he had no authority over them, he dashed into their midst, and raising his sword above his head, shouted:

“Cowards! Are ye men to desert your country like this? Back into line at once, or I’ll turn my own guns upon you, recreants as you are.”

Gen. Sullivan rode up while Billington was castigating the panic-stricken men, and he added his command to the advice of our leader.

"Men, we are fighting for liberty. What is our life to such a grand cause? Come, follow me!"

Encouraged by the firmness of the two officers, I saw the men reform and once again take their place in the front of the battle.

We held our ground, we felt that we were gaining a little, but at a fearful cost.

Cheer followed cheer as we heard that the Hessians were falling back. The announcement was music in our ears.

"Forward!"

The order was to us a glorious one; we felt we were on the road to victory.

The Hessians could not stand the terrible onslaught we made upon their ranks.

They were fleeing in a panic. The tables had turned.

Gen. Sullivan was like one inspired, he seemed to

bear a charmed life, for the bullets flew about him like hailstones, and had no more effect.

Suddenly he pulled in his horse, and stood up in the stirrups.

Like a statue he stood there, his horse as steady as the rider.

What did it mean?

We knew too soon, for the noise of battle was now heard on our left and rear, and the battalions of Gen. Clinton came rushing on the field.

I learned later that Putnam had neglected to guard the passes on the left of our army. During the previous night Clinton had occupied the heights above the Jamaica road, and now was able to bring his force down unopposed and unperceived, by way of Bedford.

Ted Billington had been sent with a dispatch to Gen. Sullivan, and when he returned I saw that his face was as white as any ghost.

"We are surrounded," he said to me, as he passed.

"Surrounded?"

"Yes, there is no hope."

"What shall we do?" I asked, almost in a shriek.

"Fight as long as we can load a musket."

"And then?"

"Die with our faces to the foe."

Sullivan rode over to Billington, and I happened to be close by at the time. I heard him say:

"We are cut off, surrounded, hemmed in between Clinton and Heister."

There was a lull in the battle at the time, a breathing space, so to speak. We looked at our ranks, and saw how many a brave boy's face was missing.

But we had not long to think of these things, for Clinton was forcing the fighting.

Forward, with the rush of an avalanche, the new regiments came, yelling and shouting like men bereft of their senses.

The Hessians, recovered from their fright, had reformed, and were closing in upon us from the front.

Frightful was the uproar, awful the slaughter, as the bullets did their work.

We were at close quarters at last, and bayonets were fixed.

The reeking sod was being covered with dead and dying.

"Hold the ground, Boys of Liberty, the day depends on you," came in a loud voice from Col. Billington.

We knew what he meant, for the Hessians were making a furious charge at us.

With wild fury they came on, and we muttered a prayer for our souls as we waited the crash.

We stood, bayonets fixed, awaiting the moment when steel would clang against steel.

We stood our ground.

The furious charge could not drive us back, and a shout of thanksgiving rose as we saw the Hessians turn and recede.

I had got separated from the others in some way, and found myself face to face with a Hessian, whose eyes flashed with murderous fire.

I had lost my gun and was weaponless, until I happened to see a British officer lying dead a little to my right.

I leaped across two dead bodies, and leaning over the dead man snatched the sword from his rigid grasp.

I had never used so long a sword before, and it seemed strange to me after the short blades to which I had grown accustomed.

The Hessian was close to me, and had his gun raised to club me to the ground.

With one swift upward cut I severed his right arm at the wrist, and his gun dropped from his hands.

But instantly there stood before me an officer whose scarlet coat, decked with gold lace, betokened him of high rank.

He had been stunned and left for dead by his people, but, recovering, he had risen, and with his sword in hand had made an effort to leave the awful field, when he suddenly came face to face with me.

"Defend yourself," I cried.

"Look to yourself, youngster, or better still, go home to your mother."

Together we dashed, not in any playful tournament such as I had read of in history, but in a real battle to the death.

Fire flashed from our blades as they crossed furiously.

Neither seemed to get an advantage. It was plain to me that my opponent was worn out and almost exhausted, but I was not his equal even then, for I was no swordsman, and the weapon was always getting in my way.

I was fighting for my life, and that gave courage and strength to my arm.

Our blades flashed, unnoticed by my comrades; in fact, I did not know where they were.

I felt myself getting played out, and my foot slipped in a pool of blood.

I instinctively raised my sword, and that act saved me, for it pierced the heart of my antagonist, and the resistance saved me from falling.

I drew the sword from his body, and I tried to stanch the blood which was welling up from his heart.

All my animosity had gone, and a smile played around his lips as he watched me.

"Too late, my boy," he whispered, "you fought well. A country is bound to be great when its boys fight like you."

"Can I do anything for you?" I asked.

“Yes. In my pocket you will find a Bible, keep that in remembrance that I bear no ill feeling, that I forgive you. Then, there is a letter addressed to my wife in England. If you survive the battle send it to her. I want——”

His breath came thick and fast, and I saw that he could not speak again.

I did not know what to do, but I knelt beside him and began to repeat the Lord's Prayer, the only prayer I knew, and a smile passed over his face as he heard the words. I finished the prayer, but his soul had left the body before I had reached the last petition.

I rose and looked around.

I was alone, alone amid hundreds of dead and dying.

Where were the Boys of Liberty?

How was it that I had been left alone on that field?

The roar of cannon, the cracking of musketry, the shouts of either side came to my ears, but from which direction I did not know.

I was afraid of being left alone on that field, and I started to run.

Every few steps I had to make a detour or else leap over dead bodies.

At times my foot slipped in pools of blood; then I would rise to my feet and wipe the blood from my hands and face.

It was horrible, and I shall never forget that day as long as I live.

Suddenly I heard a cry, a shout.

It was music to my ears, for it was the battle cry of the Boys of Liberty.

I looked all round and then made a dash in the direction from which the sound seemed to come.

Tramp! Tramp! Tramp!

Surely soldiers were marching near by, but were they friends or foes?

A few minutes would enlighten me.

Presently I saw a band of men marching steadily towards where I was standing.

A few moments and I saw that the approaching company wore the uniform of the Boys of Liberty.

I laughed with hysterical joy. I shouted, I cried, the tears running down my cheeks.

I was seen, and in five minutes Ted Billington had grasped my hand.

"We thought you dead," he said, and then in the impulsiveness of his Puritan upbringing he cried out:

"Glory, hallelujah!"

"Where are you going?" I asked.

"There is a truce for two hours, and we were seeking our lost comrades."

"Have we lost many?"

"More than half our men."

A bugle was heard in the distance and we knew that it was a signal to return.

CHAPTER XIV.

"SURRENDER OR DIE!"

Once more the scene of carnage recommenced.

Gen. Sullivan rode among us, and, heedless of the storm of bullets, gave his orders to divisions and commands, whether only a small company or a complete regiment.

"Boys," he said, as he reached our Boys of Liberty, "I have had an offer from the enemy. We can retire with the honors of war, providing we pledge our words never to take up arms against England. I have refused, in your name. Am I right?"

"Yes."

It was a loud cry that made that one little word go echoing across the country.

"We are hopelessly surrounded, we are cut off from all chance of escape. It is no longer a question of victory, but of how many of us can force our way through the lines of the enemy. We can live as prisoners or die as patriots; which shall it be?"

"No surrender!" shouted Col. Billington, and everyone of us shouted again and again :

"Victory or death!"

The cry must have reached Gen. Sullivan, who had ridden away, for he turned in his saddle and waved his sword in our direction.

Once more the order rang along our decimated lines :

"Charge!"

We dashed forward, determining that if we had to die we would not die alone.

Over fences, into and through a dense thicket, across fields, through brooklets we ran, fighting our way foot by foot, scattering death on every hand, and losing our own men by the scores.

Then came the command, passed from regiment to regiment, from company to company :

"Force your way through the enemy as best you can ; let it be every man for himself."

That showed the hopelessness of our task.

"Let us stand together, boys," shouted Billington, and we heartily responded.

The Hessians were in a strong position, and their

guns opened on us furiously, withering our ranks and causing the bravest among us to shudder.

We had fired our last round of ammunition, we were hungry, tired and nearly frantic, but we would not give in.

Shot and shell and musket balls were hurled with fatal effect into our ranks, but we kept on, inspired by our leader, who promised us another day on which we might retrieve our loss.

"If we can reach Gen. Stirling, we shall have another chance to fight," he said, knowing that we had but one hope, and that was to avenge our dead.

At last we realized that we were not being pursued.

We had outmarched the enemy, and were safe, at least for the present.

A halt was called and right gladly we availed ourselves of the rest.

One thing we lacked—food. We had not eaten anything since sunrise, and it was late in the afternoon now. Our commissariat had fallen into the hands of the enemy early in the day.

For an hour we rested, hoping that we should gain

enough strength to carry us safely to the American lines.

While we were resting, Ted Billington, who never seemed to be tired or weary, saw a horse dashing along the road to the left of us. It was saddled, though no one sat in the saddle.

Without uttering a word, the young hero was off across the field which separated us from the road, and got right in front of the panic-stricken horse.

As the animal reached where he was standing, Ted sprang towards it and caught the bridle. It seemed impossible for him to escape being dashed to pieces, but he held on and was half dragged, half carried along for more than two hundred yards.

If the bridle had snapped he would have been dashed to the ground, but fortunately the leather was of the very best.

Gradually the horse slackened its speed and then we saw our companion do a most daring and difficult thing. He gave a leap and planted one foot in the stirrup, and then, while the horse, again maddened, ran at full

speed, Ted threw his leg over its back and was seated in the saddle.

We wanted to shout our congratulations, but he was out of sight before we could do so.

Another fear then took possession of us. What if the horse ran away with him and carried him into the enemy's lines?

Col. Billington expressed no fear; he had the greatest confidence in Ted, and rightly so, but we did not know him as well, so were afraid for him.

We resumed our march, and had not gone far before we heard the sound of a horse galloping at the highest speed.

In a minute we saw Ted heading for us and waving his hat in a most frantic manner.

"Halt!"

"Halt!" he again cried at the top of his voice.

He leaped from the saddle as he got up to us, and then breathlessly he told us how he had ridden forward in order to find out how near we were to our lines.

"We are surrounded, cut off, murdered, every man of use," he exclaimed excitedly.

“What do you mean?”

“Mean? Why, Clinton is in our rear closing in upon us and the remainder of Sullivan’s command, but in front of us Gen. Cornwallis is rushing down upon us, and so we are absolutely cut off, and not a man will live to see this night.”

“We must fight our way through,” said one of our number.

“Cut our way through! Why, the English are so thick that they hide the whole country.”

“Are you afraid, Ted?” I asked.

“Afraid, not much. I can die, and will do so with my face to the foe, though with the enemy foremost and hindmost it will depend which gets here first.”

“How far are they off?”

“Why, dad, I almost thought they would be here before me?”

“Then what shall we do?”

There was one thing about the Boys of Liberty that was singular, nothing was done without consultation with us, so that the commands really came from our own votes.

"I say fight our way through and if we cannot get to safety, we can die in the attempt."

"But if they outnumber us, as Ted says, it will be like suicide to resist," the elder Billington said.

"We will show them how Americans can die."

"I suggest that we leave the matter in the hands of our colonel," I interposed.

"Brave! Amos, that's the talk I like."

"Leave it to him, say I," another said.

Then some one called for a show of hands in favor of leaving it in Col. Billington's hands, and every hand was raised.

"I accept the duty, but let there be no grumbling after I have given my decision."

"That there will not, dad, but let us die rather than live dishonored."

There was no time for further deliberation, for very soon the country was hidden by a great army marching in columns ten abreast and looking so formidable that resistance was foolish to even dream of.

An officer raised a white flag in token of desire to communicate with us.

We returned the signal, and then the officer rode forward and with very great deference saluted our colonel.

“You are surrounded, cut off ; there is no power able to save you, so I am commissioned by Gen. Lord Cornwallis to demand your surrender.”

Then, in a loud but not offensive voice, Col. Billington replied :

“The Boys of Liberty never surrender on demand ; we are free citizens of a free republic, and will only surrender when resistance is impossible, and then of our own free will and not because of any demand.”

“Resistance means the death of every one of you ; surrender means the protection of the British flag, and an honorable exchange at such times as the leaders on each side deem advisable.”

“We are, as you say, outnumbered, but our spirits are undaunted, and we would only consider surrender when we are assured that we shall be treated as honorable soldiers and accorded the honors of war.”

“Will you give your parole?”

“That I can answer when I hear the terms you have to offer.”

"Then in half an hour I will return and the articles of surrender can be considered. Do you agree to a truce for that time?"

"Conditionally."

"What do you mean?"

"That if I saw a chance to get through your lines during that time I should avail myself of it, but I will not commence hostilities until you have had time to consult with Gen. Cornwallis."

CHAPTER XV.

DASHING ABE TO THE RESCUE.

I knew, and so did we all, that Col. Billington was considering how to avoid surrendering and succeed in escaping. He walked to and fro uneasily, his arms crossed over his breast. He had never faced so great a difficulty before, for on his New England farm things went so smoothly that only a very bad harvest caused him any amount of trouble.

He was trusted by Putnam, who knew him so intimately, and the farmer-soldier would have given everything he possessed if only Israel Putnam had been there to take the responsibility, or, at least, to advise on the course to take.

Ted came to my side and in a low voice said :

“Have you noticed anything?”

“What do you mean?”

“Your eyes are sharp; have you watched the enemy?”

“No.”

"It will do you good to do so."

"Why?"

"Look and tell me what you think."

The troops under Cornwallis were divided, part of them being sent to cut off all chance of the retreat of Stirling and the other division, with which we had to deal, had for its object the separating of the remnant of Sullivan's troops and the army led by Stirling.

The division which had demanded our surrender was stationed some quarter mile away from us, and, as there were no intervening hills, we could see pretty plainly what was going on. They were trained soldiers and moved so quietly that only the sharpest eyes could tell what maneuver they were attempting.

"Well?"

I gave a start, for I was in what Minne Berger used to call "a brown study," and I turned on Ted as though the one word had been a pistol shot fired close to my ear.

"Well, what have you noticed?"

"They seem to be spreading out."

"That is just it. They are going to actually surround us."

"Are we worth it?"

I could not help asking the question, for we were only a handful of boys pitted against seven hundred, at least, of the trained veterans of the English Army.

"Every man counts," Ted replied. "Dad is so honest himself that he would never think the enemy wasn't playing fair."

"Is it not?"

"No; were we not to remain just as we were until the time allowed had expired?"

"Yes."

"Is it playing fair for the enemy to entirely surround us at a time when they are supposed to be resting?"

"I see what you mean, but what can we do?"

"Listen!"

I did not hear a sound, but Ted's face was aglow with pleasure as he held his hand to his ear.

"Play Injun," he said, throwing himself on the ground as he spoke.

I followed his example and laid down with my ear

to the ground. Then I distinctly heard a sound of marching.

"More of the enemy," I whispered.

"No, they are our men."

"How do you know?"

Ted did not reply but began in a monotonous voice to repeat:

"Right-foot, straw-foot; right-foot, straw-foot; right——"

"What are you saying?" I asked.

"It is true; I thought so; they are keeping better time, but I should know them anywhere. Amos, my boy, we shall have a scrimmage even yet."

Without explaining what he meant he rushed over to where his father was walking up and down and whispered something in his ear, then I heard the elder man say:

"Would it be playing fair?"

Ted answered by telling how the enemy had violated its compact and the man's face lighted up with a smile.

"So, they are not playing fair! Well, we can try

a bit of that, too. Ted, go among the boys and tell them to load their pistols as well as their guns, and to do it so cautiously that the enemy cannot tell what they are doing. Take some one with you, so that the boys may know all the sooner."

The order was given and we loaded our pistols and placed them in our belts so that they could easily be drawn, then we cautiously loaded our muskets and saw that our bayonets were loose in their scabbards.

Our hearts beat with expectant hope.

Our preparations were only just in time, for in a few minutes a loud cry rent the air, and, like a lot of fast horses, band of boys came dashing on toward the enemy.

How they did run!

When within gunshot distance we saw a number of barrels of guns pointed toward the enemy and then a puff of white smoke, and a loud report as the volley rang out. Before the powder smoke cleared away another volley rattled among the trees and scattered confusion in the ranks of the enemy.

A third volley was fired before the enemy was able

to respond, and then our colonel gave the word to charge, and with a glad shout we charged the enemy to our left while those on the right were taken care of by the reinforcements.

I saw a sight which I shall never forget. The newcomers were like furies, they made such a charge at the bayonet point that the veterans fell back, some throwing away their guns and even their ammunition, while others threw up their hands and appealed for mercy.

We did all we could; we fired at long range, then, while some loaded, the others ran forward and poured a volley of pistol shots into the ranks of the enemy.

A few minutes and what looked like our defeat changed into a chance of victory.

The Boys of Liberty, who had come to our assistance, were now united to us, and together we made a charge right through the ranks of the enemy.

"Back again," cried the young leader of the reinforcements.

We turned and thought to face our foe, but we found that their officers had difficulty in getting them to make a stand. At last he succeeded, and with sheer British

pluck the soldiers held their bayonets like a strong wall of steel in front.

"Come on, boys, it is victory or death, you know! Now, then, a loud hurrah for the republic, and, while you are shouting, dash into their ranks. Don't think of the steel in front, only of that in your own hands."

We rushed forward to what seemed certain death.

Not a muscle of the veterans in front of us was shaken.

What magnificent courage they possessed!

Were we not equally brave?

No, for we had the excitement of the grand rush to keep us from thinking of the consequences.

Only a few feet from that wall of steel points!

How many of us would be spitted, never to know what had struck us?

A moment, and then——

Cries of wounded men; groans of those in torture; prayers to an Almighty God for salvation; curses mingled with those prayers.

A shock! A reeling almost like that of drunken

men! A semi-consciousness only of what we were doing, and then——

“Bravo, boys! You have done nobly. Back again, charge before the enemy can recover!”

How we turned I know not, how we reached the enemy is a mystery.

I can honestly say that I acted like an automaton, doing what I was told, without thought, without reasoning it out.

Again we flung ourselves against sharp steel.

I felt a stinging sensation in my arm, but never stopped to look what it meant.

“Right about face!”

“Even numbers fire; odd numbers get ready!”

A crack of musketry, followed by a second, and then the battle commenced again in earnest.

Volley answered volley!

The air was thick with powder smoke.

Heaps of dead and wounded lay on every side; pools of blood made the green grass slippery.

The sun was setting in the west, and its color was as red as the blood that was being shed. It looked as

though the king of the heavens had taken on the color of the bloodshed on earth.

"They are on the run!"

"Glory, hallelujah!"

"After them, boys, but keep to your ranks!"

We went at double quick, each man firing as fast as he could load.

We thought we were doing well, but Capt. Bailey dashed into our midst and cried:

"You are doing well, but far too slow!"

He was off again and away to encourage others who might be lagging.

A red-coated officer had fallen to the ground, and Capt. Bailey had nearly fallen over him. Instantly the Englishman was on his feet, and had made a sword thrust at our man.

"We meet again, Gerald Bailey."

"Yes, Manvers, and we can fight as enemies."

Gerald Bailey had been of the same regiment as Capt. Manvers prior to that time when Bailey deserted and joined the Continental Army. When in the same

regiment they had been secret foes, now they had no reason to hide their enmity.

Steel clashed against steel, both were excellent swordsmen, and they fought a duel good to see.

It did not last long, for Bailey had the advantage, and as his opponent was making a thrust, which Bailey parried, an opening was given which Bailey seized and ran his sword through the heart of the English officer.

The order to fall into line came at the very moment that the duel ended, and we were victors on the field.

The enemy had retreated, leaving behind a large number of dead and wounded ; we had lost a few of our number, but nothing to compare with the losses on the other side.

We began to breathe again.

The excitement had made us forget our weariness.

Then a feeling of heaviness came over us, and we felt that it would be good to lie down and rest, but that was overcome by some one shouting :

“Three cheers for Dashing Abe!”

Not until that moment had I known that the one who had arrived so opportunely and had led us from de-

feat to a glorious victory was Abram Billington, the younger, who will be known throughout all time as Dashing Abe.

The cheers were given with tremendous power, and every one of the Boys of Liberty felt reinvigorated by the glad welcome we were able to bestow on the gallant leader.

CHAPTER XVI.

INTO THE JAWS OF DEATH.

Everything depended on the rallying power of our Continental troops. We had gained a temporary victory, and Gen. Stirling congratulated Col. Billington on his achievement.

"Do not thank me," said the colonel, his face aglow with honest pride; "the credit is due to my son, Capt. Abe. He it was who turned defeat into victory."

"Dashing Abe will be remembered in my report to Gen. Washington, and if I do not mistake, a medal will adorn his breast, but who comes here? Ah! a scout! Now we shall know what we have to do."

The scout, well-tanned with the summer sun, rode up to Stirling and reported that the British were again on the move, and that Cornwallis was within a short distance of us, well armed and with a light battery.

"We must retreat," said Stirling; "there is no chance of making a successful stand."

The general was heartbroken, and called to his staff to confer with him.

Some time elapsed and the enemy was getting nearer and nearer ; retreat was disastrous, and a stand against the overwhelming numbers of the enemy equally so, but in retreat there was unhappiness, and, perhaps, some might think, disgrace, whereas in a stand, even if every man was killed, nothing but glory could accrue.

"We will go forward to meet the enemy," cried Stirling in a fit of enthusiasm.

Preparations for a move all along the line were quickly completed. Our ranks had been so thinned that we presented only a sorry picture.

The Boys of Liberty had applied for permission to march as one body, though they belonged to two separate regiments, and when Dashing Abe urged the granting of the request, the general could not refuse.

It was only a few minutes before the order came for a general advance—the drums—alas ! we had but two—for three of our drummer boys had been killed—rolled along the line, the officers gave their commands and the glorious army of '76 moved forward.

It was a magnificent sight, the solid advance of that army, which had only just suffered defeat, followed by a mere trifling victory.

In the front rank marched Benjamin Pierce, musket in hand, as anxious as any to wipe out the remembrance of defeat. He had broken his sword and taken his place as a private in our ranks.

As we advanced, white puffs of smoke shot up along the British line.

Boom! boom! boom!

The roar of the artillery told of the deadly intent of our enemy.

Round shot came whistling down upon the ranks of our little army, while already the crack of musketry was heard in the front.

"Steady, boys!"

Tramp! tramp! tramp!

We marched calmly, though not one of us expected to live the day through, late though it was.

Col. Billington was riding with Gen. Stirling, and the command of the Boys of Liberty devolved on Dashing Abe, as the ranking officer.

He looked to the front with a glance that must have appeared like a flash of fire, so earnest was he.

"Fire!"

Like a lightning flash, a gleam of fire ran along our front, and a steady crash of musketry followed.

I know not what the other wings of our army were doing, we had the center and had quite enough to attend to without troubling ourselves about the others.

As we got nearer the enemy, we found that it was in a strong position, and its light battery opened on us furiously, while the infantry poured in a terrible shower of musket balls, that made great gaps in our ranks.

"Forward, boys! We go in to win!" Dashing Abe called out, and we answered with a cheer.

It was like rushing into the jaws of death.

We pressed on; our gallant captain in the front; his sword waving encouragement to us.

"Forward, Boys of Liberty!"

The British line looked to be one blazing line of fire.

I have often wondered how any of us escaped alive.

Men fell on every side; we dare not stop to think of our loved friends, whose hands we should never more grasp in life.

An awful cry burst on our ears; it was from the left wing, a quarter of a mile away.

What did it mean?

Alas! we learned too soon, for soon we saw the men, brave, desperate, liberty-loving men, staggering backward, throwing away their weapons and only thinking how they could save their lives.

They had faced British lead and could not stand more.

Was it any wonder that some of us thought that discretion was the better part of valor?

A few began to look back, longingly, at those who had admitted defeat and were now bent on flight.

Dashing Abe faced us, his brow sad, his eyes full of tears, but his spirit as strong as ever.

"Hold your ground, boys! Come on, follow me, and we will teach the enemy a lesson."

An answering shout went up from each one of us.

We would have followed him to death.

"Come on, I will lead you to victory!"

To death? No, to victory. Then why should we hesitate?

On the instant the British battery opened on us again, piling the ground with heaps of dead.

No hope!

We all knew it; we knew we were in the jaws of death, and that only by a miracle could any escape the fiery teeth of the dread monster.

Once more our captain tried to urge us forward, and, with bayonets fixed, we made a dash at the battery to try and silence the guns.

It was hand-to-hand now, and we enjoyed it.

We had become perfect maniacs in our rage for blood.

We were in among the guns, fighting with our backs to the iron cannon.

Benjamin Pierce leaped on the top of a gun, waved his musket above his head, and called out:

"She's loaded! Swing her round and turn her nose to our enemy."

A number tried to do so, but in vain.

We silenced the guns, and that was something gained, but that was all we accomplished; the sound of bugles told us that reinforcements were coming for Cornwallis, and that we should all be killed or taken prisoners.

“Boys, we must retreat.”

Not one obeyed willingly; we had worked ourselves into a frenzy, and death seemed more glorious than life, but we were good soldiers and obedience was a duty.

Then occurred the strangest thing in the whole campaign.

The moment we commenced to retreat in an orderly manner, the enemy ceased firing, and not one shot was sent after us.

The tremendous courage of Dashing Abe had been acknowledged and admired by even our enemies.

We marched from the scene of strife, sadly deficient in numbers.

The heavy boom of artillery told us that a battle was being waged somewhere, and we awaited orders to rush forward to participate.

It was getting dark even on that bright August night, but we found a few straggling regiments, all that remained of Stirling's army, making for Gowanus Creek, where they expected to find the reserve forces.

We joined them and listened to their tales of disaster.

CHAPTER XVII.

A MASTERLY RETREAT.

"Where is Ted?"

"Have you seen Hosea?"

"Where is dad; I mean Col. Billington?"

These and many more questions were asked as we gathered round the camp fire close upon midnight after that terrible day's fighting.

We had been pursued right up to the banks of Gowanus Creek, and hundreds of the men had been killed or taken prisoners.

Many more were drowned in the attempt to swim the creek.

Washington received us like children, who had deserved well of their parents.

Then when we had fairly exhausted our awful budget, he raised his hand for silence, and, in a pathetic voice, bade us thank God some of us had been spared.

"To-morrow we will commence again; sleep if you can, for the fight has only just begun."

We knew that there would be no sleep for any of us, any more than there would be for our great commander.

Gen. Stirling was a prisoner in the hands of the enemy.

Gen. Sullivan had also been captured.

Gen. Woodhull, wounded, had to be left on the field and so he, too, would be a prisoner of war.

The roll was called, and more than a thousand failed to answer to their names.

Among our notable missing ones were Gerald Bailey, Ted Billington, and our colonel. Alas! a hundred more were missing, but they were privates and had met with the evil fortune of war.

"I am going to find the colonel," said Dashing Abe.

"And Ted?"

"Of course."

"May I go with you?"

"If you care to take the risk, Amos."

"It is no more risk for me than you."

"It is different, he is my father, and I have a mother at home who will want news."

Abe borrowed two horses and we rode away, hoping to be back before sunrise.

We had crossed the creek and had penetrated the country held by the enemy when Abe suddenly pulled up, and, turning to me, exclaimed :

"You had better go back."

"Why?"

"I am not going to be taken alive."

"I understand."

"Then go back."

"You are my officer ; do you command it?"

"No, I only advise."

"Then I shall disobey, for I, too, will never be **taken** alive."

"Did not Capt. Bailey answer to his name?"

"I am afraid not."

"Next to my father, I honor him most ; we **must** find him."

We rode on, sometimes at a gallop, but more often crawling in the shade of the trees for fear we might be seen, now that the moon had risen.

Sometimes we saw bands of redcoats passing along, but we were not molested.

After an hour's ride we reached the last place where we had made any stand.

We saw some British soldiers among the dead, evidently getting ready for the last sad rites.

Abe was fearless. He knew that those men were human, and that they would not attempt to interfere with us in our search among the dead.

"Halt!"

The command came from an English sergeant.

"What are you doing here?"

Abe dismounted so that he might be on an equality with the sergeant and answered:

"We are seeking for our dead."

"Relatives?"

"My father and brother."

"Go on, my friends, you will not be interfered with."

We led our horses among the heaps of dead, and performed such offices as we could for those who were dying.

All over that vast field we roamed, the moonlight

guiding us to the dead as they lay with their faces turned to the sky, which their mortal eyes would never see more, but found very few of the Boys of Liberty.

"They are not here, Amos."

"No. May we not hope for the best?"

"We can hope, but search farther I must."

We mounted our horses and again galloped to the next place where carnage had reigned supreme.

It was an awful work searching among those dead.

Fearing to find those we searched for, and yet hoping that we should know what had become of them.

We had divided, so that our work could be expedited, and I could not help shivering, as at times I had to turn over some dead body to get a look at the face.

Presently I heard a cry of anguish and hastened to where Abe was kneeling.

I looked down; there was no need for words. No necessity to question, for with a smile on his face, his hand firmly grasping a letter which he had received from his wife, lay the dead body of Col. Abram Billington.

Dashing Abe was as calm as ever. It was wonderful how he bore up under his affliction.

"What are you going to do?" I asked, as I saw him try to raise his father's body.

"Put him on my horse and take him back to our lines, he could never rest in an enemy's country."

"And Ted?"

"My first duty is to my father. He was my colonel, you know."

We placed the colonel across the saddle, and, with Abe on one side and me on the other holding him as carefully as though he were a young child, we made our way back to the camp.

When we crossed the creek we proceeded to our headquarters and reverently laid the body of our loved colonel on the green grass, among his own people.

"Father! Dad!"

"Poor mother!"

They were the only words which fell from Abe's lips as he looked down on those loved features.

We turned away, and I walked silently by his side.

Presently a voice came through the early morning mist:

"Have you seen Abe?"

"Ted, is that you?"

"Abe, where have you been?"

The brothers were clasped in each others' arms, and I left them.

Capt. Gerald Bailey was alive, but wounded. He straggled into camp, weak from loss of blood, but firmly holding his own.

"I couldn't stay over there," he said; "you know I was a deserter, and they would have shot me, and I think a live soldier is better than a dead one, don't you?"

At first Washington drank deep of the anguish of defeat.

His army seemed ruined, his scouts brought news that appalled him for a time. It would be an easy matter for Howe and Clinton to press onward and capture all the rest of that army on which so many hopes had been built thirty hours before.

Washington's tranquil spirit rose above the disasters of the battle.

He planned out his campaign. Defeated he might be, but not disgraced.

In a few hours on the day following the terrible battle of Long Island, he gathered together his shattered forces, reorganized his brigades, and stood ready for an assault in the trenches at the back of Brooklyn.

If Lord Howe had pressed forward on that 28th day of August, Washington and the Continental Army would have fallen into his hands, but Howe was a sensual man and of a very sluggish temperament.

He took a day off.

He feasted and let his soldiers rest. He fancied that the war was practically over, for Washington was in his power.

On the next day there was a heavy fog over Long Island and New York Bay.

Washington knew he could not hold his position, and that his army was in great peril. He resolved to withdraw to New York.

Never did Gen. Washington have a more difficult task.

Ten thousand men, with heavy guns, arms and ammunition had to be taken across the river to Manhattan.

The enterprise was extremely hazardous and required secrecy, courage and dispatch.

Dashing Abe was at the head of a recruiting party, and I served with him. It was not his work to recruit men, but to secure boats and rafts so that the army could get across the river.

By eight o'clock that night every boat, and raft, and transport that could be obtained was lying at the Brooklyn ferry.

There, under cover of the darkness, the embarkation began.

Washington stood on the wharf and personally superintended every movement.

All night with muffled oars the boatmen rowed silently back and forth, bearing the brave patriots to the opposite shore.

At daybreak the last men were leaving the wharf when the movement was discovered by the British.

They rushed into the intrenchments, and found nothing there except a few worthless guns and stores of no value.

Howe ground his teeth with rage and ejaculated but one word:

“Fooled!”

It was expressive, and one of our men, who was a prisoner, heard it uttered and knew that it meant even more than it expressed.

The British had gained Long Island after a severe battle in which they lost over four hundred men, but that was all. The war had only commenced, and Howe knew that he had to face a more brilliant general than himself.

Leaving Gen. Putnam with four thousand men to hold New York, Washington concentrated his army along the Harlem River as far as Kingsbridge.

The battle of Long Island had dispirited many of our men, and it required all the skill of the general to

prevent the army from becoming thoroughly demoralized.

The Boys of Liberty seemed to be the only body which pledged itself to remain until the war was over.

Dashing Abe had the confidence of Washington, and many a piece of secret work did he perform for the great commander.

We loved our leader, for he was elected to that position, as soon as we had intrenched ourselves on the banks of the Harlem, and all of us were ready to follow him through any danger, even to go with him again into the jaws of death.

THE END.

NOTE.

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(vii)

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(viii)

